

**Decentering Music:  
A Critique of  
Contemporary Musical  
Research**

*Kevin Korsyn*

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS**

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Music

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For my mother,  
Irene Korsyn Marshall

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# Part I

## *Introduction*

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## PRELUDE

One day three philosophers met, as they had many times before, to discuss the essence of music. The first philosopher insisted that music is the language of the passions. The second vehemently disagreed, arguing that music is all about time and number. The third tried to reconcile their positions, claiming that it is a blend of both. In this fashion they continued for some hours. Finally the first philosopher addressed the others as follows: "My friends, we have grown old and gray debating this issue, and still have not reached a consensus. There is only one way to settle the question: let us go to Egypt and consult the oracle at Tanis." The second philosopher replied: "We would be foolish to undertake such a strenuous journey at our age. Even if we survived the frigid mountain peaks and the pirates at sea, we should probably succumb to the desert heat." Then the third philosopher said: "Here is a solution which will satisfy both of you. Let us select one of our disciples to go to Egypt, to question the oracle on our behalf." All three agreed that this was an excellent plan. They chose one of their disciples, a young man named Thamyris, and accompanied him as far as the gates of their city. Then he set off on his long adventure.

After many months, during which he suffered severe hardships, Thamyris finally reached the city of Tanis. At the temple the priests told him that he would have to pass through three chambers before he could meet the oracle. As he entered the first chamber, he saw twenty-three divas reclining on fainting couches, with cucumber slices on their eyelids. He asked them: "Why do you have cucumber slices on your eyelids?" And they replied: "Because when we listen to opera, we weep, and weeping makes our eyes swell. Now go, before you disturb our reverie." So he left them and entered the second chamber. There he saw twenty-three men, each watching an hourglass. He asked them: "Why is each of you watching an hourglass?" And they replied: "Because we are counting the grains of sand as they pass by. Now go, or you will make us lose count." So he left

them and entered the third chamber. There he saw twenty-three hermaphrodites walking in circles and balancing books on their heads. He asked them: "Why are you balancing books on your heads?" And they replied: "Because we couldn't make up our minds, and this is our punishment. Now go, before you make us lose our balance." So he left them and entered the final chamber.

There he saw the oracle, seated on a glittering throne and surrounded by a vast retinue of priests and slaves. Bowing, he addressed her as follows: "O great oracle, guardian of the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, I have just completed a perilous journey. Crossing the snow-capped mountains, I almost froze to death. At sea, our vessel capsized during a storm, and I would have drowned had I not been rescued by a friendly dolphin. In the desert, I almost perished from thirst. All this I endured so that I might find you, and ask you a question on behalf of my teachers, who are the three wisest philosophers in Greece. Therefore please tell me: What is the essence of music?" For a long time she regarded him with an enigmatic smile, but said nothing. At last she spoke: "The only thing I know is that there are no oracles." This answer pleased Thamyras so much that he kicked his heels together and rushed out the way he had come, laughing and making so much noise that the twenty-three hermaphrodites lost their balance, the twenty-three hourglass-watchers lost count, and the twenty-three divas, who were so astonished that they sat bolt upright on their fainting couches, felt the cucumber slices slide from their eyes.

# 1

## MUSICAL RESEARCH IN CRISIS

### *The Tower of Babel and the Ministry of Truth*

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#### I

This book seeks to change musical scholarship by addressing a crisis confronting us today. Although I will later explore this crisis from other angles as I develop a conceptual framework, for now it can be described as a crisis of discourse, using “discourse” here, as Jacques Lacan does, to indicate “a social link [*lien social*] founded on language.”<sup>1</sup> The issues that concern me here involve problems of language in contemporary musical research, but language must be understood not merely as a vehicle for information, nor even as a matter of style, but primarily as a social activity, as a force that joins individuals or divides them, that creates possibilities for identifications, and that transmits values and ideals, fantasy and desire. To interpret statements about music, therefore, we must consider not only their apparent content but also their pragmatic contexts: how they address us, how they station their speakers, how they are used in games of power. In trying to explain the meaning of music, or arrest its emotional flow in words, we discover something like the frustration felt by Pyramus and Thisbe, who spoke through a chink in the wall. This frustration, however, is not confined to those who speak of music. Since systems of human communication exist prior to the individual, we are “conscripted into language,” as Jean-François Lyotard puts it, drafted into a collective process that thwarts our attempts at mastery.<sup>2</sup> We always say more than we know or less than we realize. Yet this resistance to our control opens language to other cultural voices, turning utterances into “socially symbolic acts.”<sup>3</sup> This is my starting point: by reading discourse about music as an austere kind of poetry, or as an allegory that says one thing and means another, I hope to situate musical scholarship within a larger cultural frame, locating the conditions that affect not only what is said about music but what is not said. By explaining musical research in terms that challenge that field’s usual understanding of itself,



however, my approach may provoke anxiety. Such a reaction is not surprising, given Paul Smith's contention that disciplines tend to suppress the constructed nature of their objects to consolidate stable identities for their practitioners.<sup>4</sup> Yet anxiety can be productive, especially if we allow ourselves to feel its disturbing power.

When music becomes the object of academic disciplines as it is today, discourse can become a site of struggle among the factions and interest groups that compete for the cultural authority to speak about music. The expert critical and technical languages that these groups invent can foster a social bond among those who share them, but they can also alienate and exclude outsiders. This danger seems increasingly evident to many in the field. When the musicologist Peter Jeffery, for example, laments "the deep chasms that divide our specialties," he expresses a widespread concern that the production of specialized knowledge is also erecting barriers to communication.<sup>5</sup> As Kay Kaufman Shelemay observes, these barriers are becoming institutionalized: "The three major subdisciplines of modern musical research (historical musicology, ethnomusicology, and music theory) constitute distinct subcultures, each with its own professional organization to insure the perpetuation of its own distinctive social structure."<sup>6</sup> Yet these organizations—the American Musicological Society (AMS), the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM), and the Society for Music Theory (SMT)—are fragile coalitions; rivalries exist not only among them but within each. They are crisscrossed by other antagonisms, which divide the field into ever smaller units. Some of these divisions, such as those involving period or regional specializations, have existed for a long time; others, such as the division between so-called new and old musicology, are of more recent origin. Since these factions often have their own topics for conversation, preferred terminology, and frequently, proprietary interests in certain repertoires, they tend to encourage isolation. When groups stake their identities on a particular mode of discourse, they often cannot recognize the exclusions that frame their own knowledge. Under these circumstances, communication between factions breaks down. Like gears that do not mesh, their discourses cannot engage each other.

This is one face of the crisis, but it has another. Alongside this explosion of different languages, the impulse to control and centralize scholarly production is forcing discourse in the opposite direction—and this paradox will have to be explained—toward increasing uniformity. Although this urge for control is nothing new in itself, recently it has been coupled to a managerial mentality that has infiltrated many fields, from politics to health care to academics, and for which the term "professionalization" can serve as a convenient label. For the humanities, professionalization involves their gradual remodeling to conform to corporatist values: knowledge becomes a commodity, professional practice becomes standardized, and the efficient management of a career becomes a paramount goal.<sup>7</sup> These developments, which have profoundly reshaped the institutions that support musical re-

search, including the university and the academic societies such as the AMS, SEM, and SMT, will require considerable analysis later on, especially since they are connected to complex social and historical changes. For now, I will only mention a few factors that, taken together, suggest the increasing professionalization of musical scholarship. Many of these involve time and pacing; professionalization compresses time in the name of business-like efficiency. Graduate training, for example, is being streamlined at many institutions, as students are encouraged to move briskly through their degree programs; at an extreme, this might even involve financial incentives such as tuition rebates for those who achieve early candidacy for the Ph.D.<sup>8</sup> The quick tempo of education pressures students not only to enter the job market earlier than their counterparts in past decades but also to publish sooner. While avoiding the phenomenon of the perpetual graduate student, this trend also limits time for reflection and the slow maturing of ideas. Seminar papers morph into dissertation chapters or articles at an alarming rate. The corporate mentality also builds a certain planned obsolescence into scholarship, through an exaggerated reverence for scholarly currency.<sup>9</sup> (Are your sources up to date? Are you up on the latest trends?) The professional is distinguished above all by the command of certain forms and techniques—bibliographic, archival, citational, analytical, organizational, and so on—through which information is located, displayed, interpreted, and summarized, regardless of content. The desire to maintain a professional identity, to have clear demarcations between professional and non-professional, leads to attempts to codify and standardize academic practice. One notices this, for example, in the editorial practice of many journals; guidelines for prospective authors are generally becoming more detailed and explicit. The widespread use of word processors and the possibility of submitting work directly on computer disc allows journals to demand very precise formatting. For both education and research, standardization saves time: it is more efficient. It also eliminates uncertainty, or reduces it to a minimum: we know exactly what is expected of us, what defines success. Although this vision of an official discourse about music, one that is thoroughly regulated, professionalized, and standardized, remains only a possibility, a bureaucrat's dream, significant segments of the field seem to regard it as a worthy goal. (Or perhaps they feel compelled to regard it as such, compelled to submit to an anonymous, impersonal authority that they attribute to the symbolic institution, to what Lacan calls the "big Other"; we could imagine them saying to themselves, in effect: "This is where the discipline seems to be going; I'd better go along to get along . . . the big Other wants it.")<sup>10</sup>

Musical discourse faces a double crisis, then, in which the potential for communication, and thus the social bond itself, is menaced by fragmentation on the one hand and a false consensus on the other. By investigating the conditions that underlie communication, that make any particular statements about music possible, I hope to expose the impasses in our situation

while suggesting alternatives. With these concerns in mind, I will study aspects of the academic disciplines of historical musicology, ethnomusicology, and music theory as they are currently practiced in the United States, trying to understand musical research as an institutional discourse.<sup>11</sup> Along the way I will invoke a number of thinkers whose work has stimulated my own, including Judith Butler, Mikhail Bakhtin, Jacques Derrida, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Hayden White, Slavoj Žižek, and many others. None of them will provide a privileged model or final authority, none can provide ready-made solutions or answer all our questions. Instead, I regard them as my partners in a dialogue in which no one will have the last word. They will become part of a patchwork or collage that I will weave out of heterogeneous materials, working through subversive juxtapositions and unexpected derangements. Rather than impose any single method, I want to empower readers to choose for themselves by interrogating their own identifications and ideological commitments.

Although the sort of critical theory I will invoke, with models drawn from a variety of fields, may initially appear peripheral to music, I hope readers will resist such first impressions. One of my ambitions here is not merely to incorporate these models in ways that are both selective and critical but also to sketch, however imperfectly, the social and historical conditions of their emergence, so that it will gradually become clear that musical scholars are involved in these ideas whether they know it or not, particularly because their work involves processes of symbolic exchange. Postindustrial society has revealed the limitations of traditional Marxist analyses of modes of production; instead, as Mark Poster has argued, we must understand variations in modes of symbolic exchange, through what he calls “the mode of information.” The electronically mediated exchanges that pervade our lives today, for example, are not merely tools at our disposal; they also disperse the self, placing in question “not simply the sensory apparatus but the very shape of subjectivity.”<sup>12</sup> The innovations of poststructuralist thinkers like Baudrillard, Derrida, Foucault, and others, which cast doubt on traditional notions of language and subjectivity, can be viewed, in part, as attempts to come to terms with the social transformations of our time, to which the explosion of technology contributes.

Thus I am not concerned here with “applying” this or that model drawn from literary or cultural theory directly to the analysis of musical compositions; this has been done before, with varying results. Instead, I am interested in using such models to interrogate the nature of disciplinarity, using music as my primary focus, but one with much broader implications, asking how disciplines form their objects and establish identities for their practitioners in a process that is always subject to larger social and institutional factors. By raising questions of the boundaries between disciplines, this investigation will also allow us to rethink the status of the models themselves, to reconceptualize the limits of musical research in terms of what we consider intrinsic or extrinsic to it. Although my engagement with some diffi-

cult poststructuralist writers may initially resemble a series of hip references, I hope the necessity for this engagement will eventually become clear. To understand musical research as part of what Foucault calls “the history of the present,” we have to recognize that the subject who writes about music today is profoundly connected to the cultural forces of our time, whatever the subject matter may be, from Gregorian chant to hip-hop. Discourse—language considered not as an abstract entity but as a field of social interactions—is where these forces (individual and society, self and other, language and world . . .) are knotted together. When I say that the problems of musical scholarship involve problems of language, therefore, I do not mean these are simply different choices of vocabulary, different ways of speaking, or quibbles over words. If there is a crisis in musical research, and there is; if this crisis involves communication, and it does; if this sentence parodies a poem by Wallace Stevens, and it does; then this is where we—“this fragile and divided ‘we’” (Derrida)—must begin, by asking how music is transformed into discourse.<sup>13</sup>

Yet starting with discourse does not entail ignoring the sensuousness of musical sound or reducing it to words. Musical sounds are real events, and their physical properties can directly affect us. As Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have pointed out, however, the meaning of real events “depends on the structuring of a discursive field.”<sup>14</sup> They give the example of an earthquake, which might be interpreted as divine retribution or as an arbitrary natural phenomenon. Each interpretation will itself elicit different types of behavior (Should we repent for our sins or curse our bad luck?). In much the same way, Arthur C. Danto has explored the role of language communities—what he calls the “artworld”—in the experience of art; he concludes that “nothing is an artwork without an interpretation that constitutes it as such.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, how music is discursively framed will affect our reactions and may even determine whether we regard something as music at all. Imagine, for example, the following scene. You arrive late for a concert and take your seat without seeing the program. You notice people exchanging nervous glances, fidgeting, looking at their wristwatches, as the pianist sits at the keyboard for a long time without playing. Are you witnessing an embarrassing memory lapse? Or is this a performance of 4’33”, John Cage’s “silent” piano piece? The same slice of time might be perceived as a musical event, or not, depending on how it is contextualized through a variety of different social and discursive institutions and practices. We will understand music’s unique qualities all the better, therefore, when we see the relationship between discursive and nondiscursive elements in any particular case.<sup>16</sup>

As a critique of musical research as an institutional discourse, my work analyzes ideas and rhetorical strategies as they are implicated in the collective processes of culture. This book, therefore, should not be considered a guide to who’s up, who’s down in the profession; it is not a ranking of personalities. Indeed, names are relatively incidental to my concerns, and I

would gladly dispense with them, just as one might analyze the platform of a political party and not give a hoot for who wrote it. At the same time, I honor the risks that the authors discussed here have taken, and I feel myself in solidarity with them; obviously my project builds on their achievements and would not be possible without the bold experimentation that has characterized much recent work in the field.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes I may suggest tensions or contradictions in an author's thought. Often these represent the complexity of the historical and social situation to which a given work responds rather than a personal failure on the part of the author. If I sometimes seem eager to expose these tensions, it is because I regard the products of musical research as cultural artefacts in their own right, reflecting and illuminating the world in which they are embedded and without which they cannot fully be understood.

My goals? To change the field by showing that statements about music are embedded in larger cultural networks that exceed the control of any single discipline. To imagine new forms of community among musical scholars, and new types of negotiations among their discourses, that can accommodate radical disagreements about their objects of study. To expose the violence with which individuals and groups police their thought. To play, to invent, to acknowledge the need for fantasy so that we can discover ways of dealing with music that resist their own institutionalization. To dance. To defeat the Philistines. To laugh.

To laugh? Yes, to question the boundaries between seriousness and play, to banish, with a sphinx-like smile, the earnest dullness into which scholarship too easily falls. To defeat the Philistines? Yes, but they are not always an external enemy. If each of us harbors an inner child, as pop psychology claims, so perhaps each shelters an inner Philistine, a staid bureaucrat who stifles the imagination, a dour nay-sayer who enforces the status quo. To dance? Yes, to leap from one style to another, to glide among different discourses—I hope the reader will find me a graceful partner.

## II

We seem stranded in different linguistic universes even when engaging the same music. Consider, for example, two reactions to the same excerpt from *Der Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss. To represent one extreme, I have selected Wayne Koestenbaum, author of *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*. In this partly autobiographical study, Koestenbaum links opera, with its frequent gender ambiguities, its flamboyant divas, and its larger-than-life emotions, to the construction of gay identity. To represent his antithesis, I have chosen Eugene Narmour, a theorist known for his "implication-realization model" of musical structure. In this model, each musical parameter (such as melody, harmony, meter, and duration) has independent means of producing closure, so that parameters

can be evaluated in terms of “congruence” or “noncongruence,” that is, whether they work together or against each other in fostering closure or nonclosure. Since the criteria for closure and nonclosure are very precisely specified in Narmour’s model, any two observers, encountering the same music, should produce identical descriptions, provided they possess the proper stylistic competence. Narmour represents an extreme case, then, of the desire for a univocal discourse about music; his ideal of a neutral language, purged of ambiguity and aspiring to the condition of science, contrasts radically with Koestenbaum’s lyrical, evocative, personal style. This does not mean that Narmour excludes feeling—but he believes that the means by which it is produced are strictly determined. Given these differences, then, Narmour and Koestenbaum can serve to represent opposing tendencies in contemporary musical scholarship. *Der Rosenkavalier* offers a convenient opportunity to compare the two, because both have written about the Presentation of the Rose in act 2. In this scene, Sophie receives a silver rose from Octavian—a role sung by a mezzo—as a token of her betrothal to the odious Baron Ochs. Both seem especially captivated by the phrase shown in example 1.1, the moment when Sophie, who is falling in love with Octavian, smells the rose and exclaims: “Wie himmlische, nicht irdische, wie Rosen aus hochheiligen Paradies” (“How heavenly, not earthly, like roses from holiest paradise”). In confessing their love for Strauss, however, they are strange bedfellows indeed, because the manner in which they declare their ardor could not be more different.

This opera, with its gender play, is an obvious candidate for Koestenbaum’s approach, and the Presentation of the Rose inspires some of his most eloquent prose. I must quote it at length to honor his unique voice.

When the silver rose arrives, Sophie falls in love with a woman. This lesbian moment depends on roses, which exceed and baffle nomenclature (a rose is a rose is a rose). Duets usually speak the number *two*; but Gertrude Stein’s conundrum suggests that a rose introduces a third term, a third sex, into the two-pronged gender system. The silver rose—and opera itself—carry the charge of an unspeakable and chronology-stopping love because a connection arose in the late nineteenth century between *tampering with time* and *tampering with gender*.

Disturb gender, and you disturb temporality; accept the androgyne, and you accept the abyss.

Einstein, Freud, Bergson, and Proust took time apart. They demonstrated that past doesn’t precede present, that the two states create each other. And queerness, as a sensibility, a conceptual category, and a subculture, has benefited from these radical underminings of linear time. In such “deviant” and metaphysically exceptional states as homosexuality, gender loses its confidence, and reality abandons its claim. The queerest gift of opera is its ability to torque time, to stretch it, to create pockets—momentary, unending—of sacred or divine duration.

When Octavian enters, Sophie knows that time will soon be bending,

Sophie

Wie himm - - - li-sche, nicht ir - - - di-sche, wie

**Etwas breit.** ♩ = 60  
*un poco allargando*

*pp* *(ppp)*

Ro - sen vom hoch - hei-li-gen Pa - - - ra-dies.

Example 1.1. Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, act 2.

and so she exclaims, “This is so lovely, so lovely!” (“Denn das is ja so schön, so schön!”). Sophie speaks for the listener. “This is so lovely!” I sigh, hearing the soprano’s excitement and the orchestral explosion announcing Octavian’s arrival. The music provokes my exaltation and comments on it; this vocal and orchestral climax justifies my devotion to swooning and obliteration. Smelling the rose (listening to Schwarzkopf-as-Sophie, in 1947, sing the word “Paradies”), I become clandestine, insurmountable. The listener may well ask: who am I, and what is my gender, if this vocal outpouring elects me as its recipient?<sup>18</sup>

The same vocal outpouring, however, has also elected Eugene Narmour as its recipient, and he responds with entirely different questions. One of Narmour’s governing assumptions is that large intervals imply a reversal of







To arrive at the lengths of the durations of the first three notes, I used a digital stopwatch (listening via headphones), and timed each note individually five to ten times, depending on the variability of my perceptions: the note lengths expressed in hundredths of seconds are the averages of the several trials for each of the three pitches. [I have not reproduced Narmour's chart here.] For ease of reading, the decimals are also shown in simple fractions of a second along with the durational increment or decrement (expressed in percentages) of the second and third pitch—the A-sharp of the leap and the surprising ascent to the higher B.

(Averaging note-length timings was necessary since perceptual deviation can result either from false anticipation of the onset of the note, from false anticipation of the termination of the note, or from the time lag resulting from the stimulus perception to the activation of the nerve in the finger muscle to hit the button on the timer. Doubtless, the measurements are not absolutely perfect, but they are sufficient for our purposes. More accurate measurements of either duration or dynamic require elaborate digital equipment with sophisticated filtering capabilities for identifying fundamentals from among the myriad acoustical signals emanating from what is, after all, an extremely complex orchestral-vocal tapestry.)<sup>20</sup>

Since I will return to Narmour and Koestenbaum in part III, here I will only remark that I can scarcely imagine a greater contrast than that between Koestenbaum rhapsodizing about bending time and gender and Narmour measuring milliseconds with his digital stopwatch. (It's hard to picture Koestenbaum with a timepiece at all, unless it were one of the melting watches that Salvador Dali depicted in "The Persistence of Memory.") If the tension between these styles of discourse resulted in a productive dialogue, there would be scant grounds to speak of a crisis. In practice, however, writers like Narmour and Koestenbaum often provoke passionate reactions of love or hate, identification or rivalry, emulation or rejection. While some might find Koestenbaum's blurring of musical and erotic pleasures liberating or imaginative, others may dismiss it as self-indulgent or vague, as voguish journalism. Responses to Narmour's work have been equally divided. His attempt to measure minute variations among performances may seem the epitome of scholarly patience or an exercise in absurdity. Some may cultivate a taste for both styles of writing, but they generally keep them, I suspect, in separate mental compartments, without being able to initiate a dialogue between their positions. Still others may reject both, perhaps on the grounds that their chosen repertoire is confined to traditional Western canons; it is easy to imagine someone arguing as follows: "Both Narmour and Koestenbaum ignore popular musics and the relation of music and society; even if one loses himself in intellectual games and the other by wallowing in emotion, they resemble one another in their refusal to engage the world, in their indulgence in elite pastimes. Narmour closeted with his headphones and Koestenbaum ravished by his recorded divas are

both engaged in solitary pleasures, so that despite appearances, the difference between them amounts to that between Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

Such sharply divided reactions typify our present situation, in which the discussion of music has split into hostile camps and embattled factions, torn by angry debates. Some will recall, for example, the theorist Kofi Agawu's presentation at the 1995 AMS/SMT/SEM conference, "Analyzing Music under the New Musicological Regime." One individual described the ensuing controversy, which continued to agitate the AMS e-mail list for months, as "a current debate that is tearing academic music study apart."<sup>21</sup> Or consider the skirmishes between Susan McClary, best known for her feminist insights in musicology, and her numerous critics, of whom Pieter C. van den Toorn is only one of the most virulent.<sup>22</sup> Ingrid Monson expresses the frustration that this atmosphere of strife can produce when she concludes her ethnomusicological study of jazz improvisation with an appeal to "move away from the dichotomous understandings of us/them, heterogeneity/homogeneity, modernism/postmodernism, structure/agency, and radicalism/conservatism that continue to plague our discussions."<sup>23</sup> These debates can sometimes degenerate into accusations of bad faith. In an interchange in *Current Musicology*, for example, Lawrence Kramer and Gary Tomlinson, two of the most articulate advocates of new approaches in musicology, hurl devastating charges at each other. Kramer believes that Tomlinson wants a "musicology without music" and accuses him of a "will to power" and a "will to depersonalization."<sup>24</sup> Tomlinson responds with equal vehemence: "I resist the many imperatives, the either/or dualisms, the all-or-nothing propositions, and the implacable teleologies Kramer folds into my views."<sup>25</sup> Although music, like any field, has always had its controversies, the emergence of so many new factions creates new opportunities for disputes, new antagonisms. And the debates increasingly seem to involve fundamental disagreements in which the participants do not share even the most basic assumptions about methods, priorities, or goals. Formerly one argued about, say, the relevance of Beethoven's sketches toward understanding his work; underlying the dispute was a tacit agreement about the value of Beethoven's music and its centrality to the repertoire. Not so today. Current debates about the nature of the musical canon, for example, may question the desirability of studying Beethoven at all. Even within groups whose passion for a particular repertoire or commitment to similar ideals and values might seem to provide a sense of solidarity, a perception of fragmentation can prevail. In a wide-ranging critique of the politics of authorship in African American musical scholarship, for example, Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., observes a lack of community in this field: "Although they all treat black music in similar ways, one does not get the sense that they conceive of themselves as building a cohesive (if sometimes contentious) project."<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps more pervasive than overt conflict, however, and even more corrosive, is a sort of radical nonengagement with competing approaches, so that the tension between factions must be read between the lines, emerging

as a significant absence rather than an obvious presence. Indeed, these tensions can coexist with expressions of openness, with Enlightenment bromides about tolerance and diversity. Often scholars are willing to acknowledge other methods only so long as they do not have to rethink their own—as long as these methods remain safely marginal. Returning to Narmour and Koestenbaum, obviously many people will admit that there is room in the field for both sorts of work, while still regarding them as externally opposed, as points of view that have no claim on each other. That is why this book is *not* an appeal for tolerance, at least as that term is generally understood. Instead my critique argues for the urgency of engaging the marginal, of seeing what is excluded (or almost excluded) from our work as its condition of possibility. Monologic discourses depend on an internal suppression of differences, on a denial of our own internal divisions, and the tendency to reduce others to representatives of factions, to classify others as useful or not useful to our concerns, is often a way to keep potentially disruptive thought at a safe distance.

The situation recalls the biblical story of the attempt to build a tower that would touch the heavens. God frustrates this scheme by sowing linguistic confusion, saying “Let Us make a babble of their language, so that no one will understand what anyone else is saying.”<sup>27</sup> We can easily imagine how the exasperated builders might have turned to violence when their companions answered them in gibberish. Something similar has happened to music, although the violence is rhetorical rather than physical. Members of opposing groups seem to be speaking different languages or playing different language games. When individuals stake their identities on particular language games, they regard each other’s work with indifference or even with contempt. Scholars seem to be addressing ever smaller groups, unable to communicate with each other, much less with a wider audience. As voices become increasingly shrill, the hope of building a community, of joining a common enterprise, lies in ruins.

Musical research is becoming a Tower of Babel.

### III

This situation cannot be understood from the perspective of music alone, because it stems as much from larger cultural developments and social changes as from any internal logic of the field (although the academic division of labor obscures these connections). Fragmentation, lack of consensus, division into multiple language communities—these are features not only of contemporary musical research but also of postmodern experience in general. “Postmodern” is one of those tricky terms that means different things to different people. For now I shall use it to designate the cultural counterpart to what is often called “late,” “multinational,” or “postindustrial” capitalism.<sup>28</sup> In drawing attention to connections between capitalism

and culture, I do not mean to suggest any crude economic determinism. But the economic transformations since World War II have produced new social forms, which have forced people to search for new ways to make sense of their lives.

A digression on postmodernity will allow me to pose, in a preliminary way, questions that this book will move toward answering (and will reask and answer in a variety of ways): How do individuals in musical research come to identify with group discourses? How do these groups achieve their identities, their cohesion as groups? How do their discourses achieve their persuasive effects? What is the relation between the specialized forms of identity that individuals maintain as scholars and social identity in general? These questions derive their urgency from the impasses I have already observed in contemporary musical discourse. Since these groups seem to be talking past each other—since their interactions often lead to deadlock—we need to understand how identity is constituted, so that it might be changed.

We will move closer to answering these questions, and to understanding their significance, if we consider the social construction of identity today. According to Laclau and Mouffe, society is no longer structured around a central antagonism such as that between the people and the *ancien régime*, but instead involves “an irreducible plurality of antagonisms.”<sup>29</sup> Among the various movements for social justice today, involving race, class, gender, sexuality, ecology, and so on, there is no hierarchy that would allow one struggle to become the basis for the others. In one of their most provocative formulations, Laclau and Mouffe contend that “society does not exist,” that is, does not exist as a closed totality.<sup>30</sup> Thus, like many social and political theorists today, they prefer to avoid the term “society” and speak instead of “the social.” Just as the postmodern social is decentered, so too are its individuals. Identity today is constituted through participation in numerous and changing groups, which overlap and contradict each other. Thus one might work for a multinational corporation whose interests often run counter to those of one’s nation. Or one might belong to an ethnic minority that is dispersed among various nations, or sympathize with ecological struggles that stress a global perspective. Each of these groups is characterized by a discourse, and each discourse makes a subject position available, so that one can speak, for example, as an employee of Microsoft or General Motors, a citizen of the United States or France, a person with Palestinian or Serbian roots, a member of Greenpeace or the Sierra Club, and so on. There is no hierarchy among these subject positions, no single or permanent center, so that identity today is shifting, multiple, dispersed, fluid.

This profusion of subject positions has inevitably erupted into musical research, as individuals try to heal the divisions among various aspects of their lives. Judith Peraino, in her provocative lesbian study of Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*, speaks for many when she confesses her desire “to suture the Cartesian-like split between the personal and the professional.”<sup>31</sup> The emergence of political identities in musical research, including femi-

nist, gay, lesbian, and postcolonial points of view, is perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this desire. Since science and technology, however, are just as much a part of contemporary experience as these political identities, the trend toward highly technical and mathematical languages in music is also a characteristic expression of postmodernity. Ironically, however, the very attempt to unify personal and scholarly experience—an attempt that is both necessary and laudable—produces division, because postmodern life is so radically fragmented. If, as Laclau and Mouffe maintain, “there is no final suture of the social,” then there are splits not only *between* the personal and the professional but also *within* each.<sup>32</sup> The crisis of musical discourse, then, is also an identity crisis.

As another step in making sense of our predicament, I suggest that we connect our local problems of communication to the failure of unifying narratives that Lyotard describes in *The Postmodern Condition*.<sup>33</sup> According to Lyotard, changes in the status of knowledge have produced a legitimization crisis for society and its institutions, because the validation of scientific knowledge no longer depends on the narratives that legitimate the social bond by “connecting the search for justice and the search for truth.”<sup>34</sup> Master narrative (or metanarrative or grand narrative) is Lyotard’s term for these stories that work to support the social bond. After the decline of sacred narratives in the West, only a few master narratives have prevailed, and Lyotard mentions several: the Enlightenment narrative of emancipation through reason, the Marxist story of the liberation of the working class, the capitalist narrative of the creation of wealth, and the speculative narrative of German Idealism.<sup>35</sup> Why does Lyotard call these narratives rather than worldviews or philosophies? Because they impose a plot on human history, with a beginning, middle, and end. In this respect they resemble myths, which also use stories to legitimate the social order, but whereas myths return to origins to explain how the present order was instituted, master narratives concern the future, providing history with a goal by imagining a time when a certain type of human being will become universal, thus calling for change in the present to bring the desired future to fruition.<sup>36</sup> Justice and truth are connected in a unified account, assuring us that the pursuit of knowledge will result in a just society, and all of the separate, individual narratives become commensurable, in that they are all working toward the same future.

As Lyotard points out, these master narratives have played a crucial role in justifying the mission of the university, particularly through Wilhelm von Humboldt’s plan for the University of Berlin, which provided a widely imitated model for the modern university. In *The University in Ruins*, the late Bill Readings notes that unlike the medieval university, which was grounded in theodicy and thus on an external principle, the modern university is based on an internal unifying principle, on an idea that confers meaning and purpose on all the university’s separate activities.<sup>37</sup> Thus for Immanuel Kant, the idea of reason provides such a unifying principle: in

*The Conflict of the Faculties*, he suggests that each discipline interrogate its own grounds with the aid of philosophy to achieve internal purity.<sup>38</sup> A different unifying idea, however, has proved far more influential than Kant's program: the idea of culture. "Culture" here translates the German word *Bildung*, which designates both the products of human activity and the process of cultivation, of assimilating culture. In Humboldt's plan for the University of Berlin, the cultivated individual becomes the hero of a master narrative in which all the separate areas of knowledge come together and find their purpose. Readings usefully supplements Lyotard's account by distinguishing between various national traditions. Thus in Germany, for example, the idea of *Bildung* became associated with assimilating a national culture, leading to a concentration on national literatures as the core of the curriculum, with literature replacing philosophy as the center of the university. In America, on the other hand, the elective nature of the political bond produced an emphasis on choosing a literary canon of world masterpieces rather than on a national tradition.<sup>39</sup>

Although musicology did not become a university subject until a later period, its place in the university had already been staked out, reserved for it by the master narratives invoked by Humboldt and others. Just as the idea of producing a national identity through *Bildung* led to privileging the study of national literatures, it also led to the study of national musical traditions, particularly in German-speaking universities. Guido Adler's program for the systematization of musicology, for example, gave pride of place to style analysis, with the ultimate objective of characterizing national styles.<sup>40</sup> The German models, of course, were imported to the United States. As late as 1957 Manfred Bukofzer could still confidently declare that "the description of the origin and development of styles, their transfer from one medium to another, is the central task of musicology."<sup>41</sup> In serving this center, the various subdisciplines of musicology can function harmoniously, can cooperate in a totality of knowledge. Thus Carroll C. Pratt (also writing in 1957) said that "a penetrating analysis of musical style . . . needs a formidable array of propaedeutic and auxiliary disciplines."<sup>42</sup> Yet it is possible to share a belief in the metanarrative of culture while disagreeing with the priorities set by Bukofzer, Pratt, and others. This is what Joseph Kerman did in 1965 in his appeal to reorient musical research in the direction of criticism. He reverses the relative priorities that Bukofzer assigns to style versus the individual piece, and establishes a different hierarchy among the various subdisciplines.

Each of the things we [musicologists] do—paleography, transcription, repertory studies, archival work, biography, bibliography, sociology, *Aufführungspraxis*, schools and influences, theory, style analysis, individual analysis—each of these things, which some scholar somewhere treats as an end in itself, is treated as a step on a ladder. Hopefully the top step provides a platform of insight into individual works of art—into Josquin's "Pange lingua" Mass, Marenzio's "Liquide perle," Beethoven's Opus 95, the *Oedipus Rex*.<sup>43</sup>

Kerman's program suggests the American emphasis on an elective canon rather than the German emphasis on national styles and traditions. Yet Kerman shares with Bukofzer and Pratt a commitment to certain central values: There is an essential human nature that is revealed historically in works of art; by assimilating this common culture, one realizes one's identity as a member of the human community. They disagree, however, as to whether this human nature is best revealed in the collective spirit of each *Volk*, and thus in national styles, or in the work of exemplary individuals, who are the vanguard of the human race.

Today, however, such universal claims have lost their persuasive force. As Lyotard remarks in a widely cited statement: "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives."<sup>44</sup> We might incorporate the collapse of master narratives into several competing plot forms, several alternative narratives. We might, for example, regard it as a liberating moment, one that releases new energies. Or we might regard it as a tragic loss. Neither of these responses, however, quite catches the ambivalence of Lyotard's formulation. The very gesture that liberates this "we," or plunges it into mourning, also erases it: without master narratives there is no "we," no hero of the story, no subject with whom we all identify. Although Lyotard warns of the dangers of nostalgia for bygone narratives, their demise is a problem, a site of struggle, and not an invitation to a complacent relativism. Laclau reinforces this point from a slightly different perspective when he remarks that the loss of universalism does not simply eliminate it but "opens the way to the very tangible emergence of its void, of what we could call *the presence of its absence*."<sup>45</sup> For musical research the question becomes: How can "we" have a research community when there is no "we," when the master narrative authorizing that "we" no longer commands belief? Clearly our notions of community must change—but how? How can "we" discipline music when identity in the postmodern is continually reconfigured? How can "we" legitimate musical research, define its tasks and priorities, provide it with a compelling rationale, in the absence of the sort of master narratives that were once invoked to justify its cultural mission and its place in the university?

I will eventually return to these questions, but first I must continue to explore our dilemma.

## IV

So far, my discussion of the crisis has been one-sided and thus potentially misleading. As I said earlier, the crisis has a paradoxical quality, combining as it does the fragmentation of language with its opposite, as professionalization tends to centralize the field by imposing a standardized discourse. Before examining in detail how this affects musical research, it will be helpful to consider how professionalization has transformed the university as a whole.



Bill Readings provided perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of the causes and effects of professionalization on the university. Starting from Lyotard's idea of the decline of master narratives, Readings contends that the university no longer aspires to produce a national subject through a process of internalizing a common culture. What has replaced culture as the unifying principle of the university? In Readings's view, the most pervasive strategy of legitimation today is the discourse of "excellence," a term invoked almost universally by administrators to describe their institutions. Yet "excellence" has been bleached of any particular content, becoming "only a simulacrum of an idea," a purely internal and circular criterion of value: "Its very lack of reference allows excellence to function as a principle of translatability between radically different idioms: parking services and research grants can each be excellent, and their excellence is not dependent on any specific qualities or effects they share."<sup>46</sup> Under the regime of excellence, the traditional division of functions in the university—teaching, research, and administration—is skewed to favor administration, not only through the actual growth of that sector but also by assigning many managerial tasks to professors, who frequently must worry about the cost-effectiveness of course offerings, while more and more teaching responsibilities are delegated to adjunct faculty, and students are treated as consumers of the university-corporation. In this climate, research becomes one more thing to administer, and knowledge is commodified, reduced to its exchange value. The following paragraph provides a compelling statement of Readings's position.

The University no longer has a hero for its grand narrative, and a retreat into "professionalization" has been the consequence. Professionalization deals with the loss of the subject-referent of the educational experience by integrating teaching and research as aspects of the general administration of a closed system: teaching is the administration of students by professors; research is the administration of professors by their peers; administration is the name given to the stratum of bureaucrats who administer the whole. In each case, administration involves the processing and evaluation of information according to criteria of excellence that are internal to the system: the value of research depends on what colleagues think of it; the value of teaching depends upon the grades professors give and the evaluations the students make; the value of administration depends upon the ranking of a University among its peers. Significantly, the synthesizing evaluation takes place at the level of administration.<sup>47</sup>

How can scholarship be self-referential, as Readings implies here? How can it literally be about *itself*? One way to grasp this is through the idea of "reflexive production." Generally speaking, reflexivity involves something turning back on itself, as in the case of reflexive verbs. The term has been used, for example, to describe the application of a theory to a critique of its own premises (e.g., did Freud's own Oedipal anxieties cause him to universalize the Oedipus complex, to make sweeping claims for it?). For many so-



cial theorists, including Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash, increasing reflexivity characterizes contemporary social agents and institutions.<sup>48</sup> Beck, for example, differentiates between simple modernity and what he calls “reflexive modernity.” In the latter form, accelerating modernization confronts itself, as the very success of technology produces unintended consequences (global warming, nuclear waste, overpopulation, biological engineering, etc.).<sup>49</sup> This situation can lead to structural reflexivity, in which institutions critique themselves, and self-reflexivity, in which agents monitor themselves.<sup>50</sup> In reflexive production, the labor process turns back on itself, becoming its own object. This already happened in the phenomenon of Taylorization early in the twentieth century—the time-and-motion studies that led to the reorganization of the work environment—but it has become more prevalent in the post-Fordist economy, particularly in design-intensive industries.<sup>51</sup> In such industries, the labor process is continually monitored in the interest of efficiency. (Might the steps involved in production be reordered? Might the product be modified to save material costs? Might we more effectively track demand to reduce inventory?) I suggest that something similar happens in the professionalization of the humanities: scholarly production turns back on itself, monitoring itself with corporate efficiency.

In musical scholarship, this reflexive turn can be observed in recent changes in the character and functions of professional organizations. Since their inception, these organizations have exercised considerable power to regulate discourse about music. They sponsor awards, for example, for outstanding publications, such as the Kinkeldey Prize of the AMS or the Wallace Berry Prize of the SMT, which serve as models for exemplary scholarship; they sponsor journals (*Journal of the American Musicological Society* [JAMS], *Ethnomusicology* [EM], *Music Theory Spectrum* [MTS]) that serve as their official organs; they underwrite publications through subventions and sponsor collaborative projects; they award scholarships to recognize outstanding students; they serve as forums for the presentation of research that has been subjected to peer review. More recently, however, the meetings of such organizations include sessions that have no scholarly content but concern the process of academic production, including discussions of the criteria by which the professional societies operate. This reflexive moment, when the academic organizations that were founded to advance the study of music begin to study themselves, marks a new stage in the professionalization of musical discourse, and one with profound consequences.

For example, at the 1997 annual meeting of the SMT, a special session on October 31, sponsored by the SMT Committee on Professional Development, was entitled “Becoming Visible in the Field of Music Theory: Presentations to Professional Meetings.” This event, and others like it, signals the consolidation of the new professionalism; it is hard to picture such an occasion taking place twenty years earlier. The abstract for this session deserves to be reproduced in its entirety:

The panelists, who have been chairs of SMT program committees at both the national and regional levels and have presented a variety of papers themselves, speak on preparing an effective proposal/abstract, choosing the right type of meeting for submission, evaluating the proposals (comments from program chairs on what has been successful and unsuccessful), and presenting the paper (preparation and use of handouts and musical examples, delivery, clarity, and other matters). The panel also evaluates mock proposals and presents information on types of proposals submitted to SMT in the past. The advantages of involvement in regional theory societies are emphasized. The audience participates in discussion and in evaluation of sample proposals.<sup>52</sup>

The objective here resembles that involved in post-Fordist reflexive production: the labor process is reflexively monitored to improve efficiency, except that instead of manufacturing widgets we are manufacturing scholarly presentations. As with a business, reflexivity depends on flows of information; here insiders share their knowledge, providing "information on types of proposals submitted to SMT in the past," and "comments . . . on what has been successful and unsuccessful." Here we see a shift from a guild mentality in which mentoring was informal and casual to a professional mindset in which mentoring becomes institutionalized and official. This opening of the process undoubtedly has certain benefits and is the result of benevolent intentions. Unfortunately, scrutiny of the process is focused largely on managing it efficiently, on the brisk attainment of career goals; since the goals themselves are not evaluated, the session risks confirming existing power relationships rather than challenging them. What has been successful becomes a model for imitation; the successful proposals must have been good: they were successful. This sort of self-confirming circularity typifies the professionalist ethos.

Since this book is a second-order study of musical research, it shares the reflexive turn I have just criticized in the professional organizations. Is this a contradiction? No, because reflexivity can take multiple forms. Lash, for example, distinguishes between cognitive, aesthetic, and hermeneutic reflexivity. Cognitive reflexivity, as Lash describes it, serves utilitarian individualism,<sup>53</sup> and this is the form of reflexivity involved in professionalization. Professionalization compels one to objectify oneself, to make oneself into an object for surveillance. Aesthetic reflexivity, as Lash portrays it, involves "a critique of the universal by the particular," as individual cases that resist classification cause us to question and revise our categories and frameworks. Hermeneutic reflexivity involves "the interpretation of social background practices."<sup>54</sup> A critique of musical research should, I feel, include all these types of reflexivity. In a sense, reflexivity is both a problem and a solution. We have to consider not only how to achieve the goals set by the profession but also whether the goals themselves are desirable and whether other goals might be better.

It is not surprising that the SMT Committee on Professional Develop-

ment chose the conference proposal/abstract as the site to make the expectations of the profession explicit. The new professionalism depends on what I call the “ideology of the abstract,” choosing the word “abstract” here for its multiple resonances. This has two forms:

1. The abstraction of the forms of scholarship from any content. As we saw in the description of the session on “Becoming Visible in the Field of Music Theory,” the form of the conference proposal was studied in isolation, broken down so it can be learned part by part, and mastered as a technique that serves professional advancement.
2. The reduction of content to an ever smaller nucleus, exemplified by the abstract as a textual genre. Musical research today involves the circulation of abstracts, by which knowledge is summarized, paraphrased, boiled down so that it can assume a portable form in the competition for cultural capital, becoming a kind of currency. This severing of form and content enhances the sense of control, so that their manipulation becomes largely a matter of training and calculation.

The role of abstracts in scholarship extends far beyond their role in the selection of conference papers. At major conferences, for example, scholars are asked to submit two abstracts, one three to five pages (double-spaced) and a second, shorter version—an abstract of the abstract—suitable for publication in a book of abstracts. This book allows conference-goers to decide which papers to hear. Conference reports may reprint these abstracts, summarize them further, or provide independent summaries. Since conference papers are often recycled into articles, and the articles into books, the constraints that are put on oral presentations influence published work as well. Some journals have even started attaching abstracts to articles, perhaps emulating the practice of scientific journals. Book reviews summarize books, sometimes with critical evaluation, sometimes not; articles, books, and reviews are summarized in RILM abstracts. Another level of summary occurs in the annual faculty activities reports that most academicians prepare, as well as in peer reviews and recommendations that influence hiring decisions, tenure, and promotion.

Although abstracts have always existed in scholarly fields, they assume new functions within the growing professionalization of music. The abstracts generated by peer reviews, curricula vitae, and faculty activities reports, for example, allow research to be monitored by administrators who may lack the expertise to understand it themselves, as they examine reports on research, collate the summaries of summaries, and read the expert opinions. Consequently, this hierarchy of abstracts cannot be considered ancillary to research, because projects that can be efficiently summarized are more likely to be undertaken, and scholars must anticipate the criteria by which they will be judged. Increasingly, these evaluations tend to have a quantitative component; in the University of Excellence, as Readings remarks, accountability is often confused with accounting.<sup>55</sup> In being consid-

ered for tenure at many institutions, for example, the candidate may be required not only to produce a certain amount of work, measured in terms of the number of articles and books, but also to substantiate the value of the research by quantitative means. This might include calculating the relative prestige of journals by documenting the ratio of acceptance to rejection for submissions, or indicating the number of times one's research has been cited in the scholarly literature. Through such abstract equivalences, knowledge becomes a commodity, since totally different scholarly products can be compared in terms of prestige value.

I previously invoked the Tower of Babel as an image that captures the mutual alienation of language communities in the field; now another fictional structure seems appropriate to suggest the tendency toward uniformity and the potential alienation from one's own language that characterizes the ideology of the abstract. In George Orwell's *1984*, the protagonist, Winston Smith, works in a pyramid of "glittering white concrete" 300 meters high.<sup>56</sup> In this building, called the Ministry of Truth, a vast bureaucracy toils relentlessly to serve Big Brother, propagandizing the entire population to produce an absolute political orthodoxy. One of their tasks is to transform all discourse into Newspeak, an artificial language intended not only to replace standard English but also to render politically deviant thought—thoughtcrime, as it is called in Newspeak—impossible. Something similar menaces musical scholarship, as the cult of the abstract threatens to impose rigid controls on thought, becoming a kind of Newspeak. Since projects that can be efficiently summarized are more likely to be undertaken, the possibility of saying something about music that resists paraphrase, that cannot be summarized or conveniently reduced to an abstract, becomes unthinkable. When individuals are compelled to measure themselves against quantitative standards, when they must address administrators who are remote from the work itself, when they are forced to objectify themselves, to police their own thought, they come to resemble the inhabitants of Orwell's dystopia.

Musical research is becoming a Ministry of Truth.

## V

My analysis of the crisis is still incomplete. So far I have discussed each side of the crisis in turn, exploring the Tower of Babel and the Ministry of Truth. Now I must try to capture the relation between the two, their paradoxical coexistence; doing so may compel me to modify all the conclusions up to this point. One might imagine that the two exist in a state of harmonious complementarity, that the bureaucratic inertia of professionalization restrains the extravagance of the different language communities, curbs their wildness, while the persistent experimentation of the latter counteracts the former's tendency toward repetition and dull uniformity, resulting in a state

of equilibrium. It would be pleasant, and comfortable, to idealize scholarship in this way. But doing so ignores the frequent rhetorical violence, the hostility, the very real disaffection among many musical scholars today. Rather than accept such a rosy view, I suggest that the two sides of the crisis spring from similar impulses.

This assertion may seem counterintuitive. After all, in the Tower of Babel, language games multiply to the point of idiosyncrasy; this tendency toward individualization would seem very remote from the bureaucratic treadmill of professionalization. To understand the points of contact between these phenomena we must rethink our assumptions about the differences between bureaucracy and individuality. We tend to associate bureaucracy with preservation of the status quo, with inertia and repression, and individuality with freedom and initiative. When the status quo demands constant change, however—when the system itself demands relentless progress and innovation—change and constancy can trade places, turning into each other. Indeed, in his discussion of “the antinomies of postmodernism,” Fredric Jameson contends that this is precisely what happens in contemporary society; he draws attention to “the equivalence between an unparalleled rate of change on all the levels of social life and an unparalleled standardization of everything—feelings along with consumer goods, language along with built space—that would seem incompatible with just such mutability.”<sup>57</sup> His characterization of postmodern life seems peculiarly apt as a description of the state of musical research today; the same professional model that mandates increasing uniformity also mandates that scholars differentiate themselves from each other. Consider, for example, the institution of tenure. It is awarded only for original contributions to one’s field—or so the guidelines for tenure at most universities stipulate. Like the children of Garrison Keillor’s fictional Lake Wobegon, who are all above average, (presumably) all tenured humanists are original. The type of originality that tends to be valued, however, must be classifiable according to norms. Such normalizing classifications individualize scholars in a way that corresponds to the ideology of the abstract: individuality can be *summarized* within categories, so that a person’s value can be fixed through a precise location in professional space. This becomes a kind of niche marketing; one becomes marketable as a scholar by having a recognizable identity as an outstanding representative of a particular type. Thus the bureaucratic treadmill manufactures individuality—or a type of individuality—even as it produces conformity.

Yet this conclusion, which I have phrased in a deliberately provocative manner, cannot be allowed to stand without further support. For this I will enlist Michel Foucault’s work on the relations between power, individuality, and norms. Here we have to understand the motivations behind Foucault’s radical shift from conceiving power in negative, repressive terms to seeing it as productive. He was trying to explain the emergence of new and historically significant forms of domination, new strategies of social control that

require a greater knowledge of individuality. By investigating institutions such as schools, factories, armies, hospitals, and prisons, which conventional historians have generally neglected, he established that a profound social transformation was taking place in these marginal sites during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These new practices derive power by accumulating knowledge about individuals. Whereas ordinary individuality once escaped the notice of power, the complexity of specialized tasks involved in the first large factories, for example, demanded an ever more detailed knowledge of individual aptitudes, skills, strengths, and weaknesses, to extract the maximum utility from each person: "the disciplinary methods . . . lowered the threshold of describable individuality, and made of this description a means of control and a method of domination."<sup>58</sup> These tactics began in response to local situations, as a solution to specific problems such as petty theft in factories, the control of epidemics, and the rehabilitation of prisoners, but their cumulative effect has been to produce a disciplinary society. Foucault contends that we cannot understand these changes if we still operate with a model of power as a binary relation between rulers and oppressed. The new forms of power colonize individuals from within, so that they submit willingly and spontaneously. Power is productive, and what it produces is individuality, by giving people strategies by which they become aware of themselves as describable entities.<sup>59</sup>

Foucault isolates three factors that are crucial to this particular configuration of knowledge and power: hierarchical surveillance, normalizing judgment, and the examination.<sup>60</sup> Through hierarchical surveillance, power makes individuals visible, isolating them and accumulating information about them. Through normalizing judgment, the disciplines measure, categorize, and classify individuality; one becomes visible with reference to various norms, as an average student or a failing one, as sick or healthy, as normal or deviant with regard to sexuality, and within each classification more and more degrees of order can be introduced. The ultimate objective is for individuals to monitor themselves from within, to internalize the process of surveillance so that power operates with minimal expenditure: "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection."<sup>61</sup> (Note the similarity between this sort of autosurveillance and what was previously called cognitive reflexivity.) Hierarchical observation and normalizing judgment converge in the examination. Foucault contrasts the examination, which establishes individual differences, with earlier modes of power in which individuals received their status from birth: "As power becomes more anonymous and functional, those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualized."<sup>62</sup>

In music, as in most academic fields, graduate training marks a key stage in internalizing the values of the profession. The student is continually



monitored—his or her individuality is carefully documented, classified via norms, and singled out for praise or correction. Even minor social interactions may be noticed and may provide material for judgments about the student's collegiality. Professionalization creates many more possibilities for classification according to norms. In their influential report on graduate education funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, for example, William G. Bowen and Neil L. Rudenstine place great stress on holding students to a standard timetable.<sup>63</sup> The average time for completion of coursework or the dissertation becomes yet another norm against which individuals can be measured. Throughout one's graduate experience, one must submit not only to numerous written examinations but also to the great ordeals of the Ph.D. qualifying exams and the dissertation defense. These rites of passage are carefully choreographed by tradition, their roles precisely specified. They are framed by periods of suspenseful waiting, in which the candidate is asked to leave the room both before and after the exam while the committee discusses his or her case. They conclude with a ritual crossing of the threshold, as the candidate is invited back into the room; congratulatory handshakes signal the successful completion of the ordeal.

Graduate training is complete when the norms of the profession are internalized, when the individual becomes self-monitored. As Mary Schmelzer remarks, the successful academic must anticipate the expectations of her institution "by turning her surveillance skills on herself."<sup>64</sup> Although self-policing, the academic is still subject to examination by many authorities, starting with job interviews and continuing with the annual performance review, the tenure process, consideration for promotions, and so on. In addition to internal evaluations within the college or university, the scholar is also examined by professional organizations. The conference presentation, for example, is a highly stylized ritual in which the individual must submit to a series of examinations: first one must survive the selection process and then the presentation itself, followed not only by random questions from the audience but sometimes also the prepared response of an established authority. Here Foucault would alert us that surveillance is not independent of what is observed. Since individuals must anticipate the criteria by which they will be judged, these criteria influence every aspect of scholarship. As an example, consider once again the SMT special session on "Becoming Visible in the Field of Music Theory." In the case of conference papers, one must craft the abstract to appeal to the disciplinary Other, calculating everything from the prestige value of a given topic (Is this topic still considered current? Is it perhaps too new and controversial? Will a paper on a controversial topic enhance my exposure?) to the choice of individual words (Is this expression too colloquial for an academic paper? Is the first person singular pronoun acceptable in current academic discourse?). Thus one "becomes visible in the field of music theory" (or any other field) by placing oneself under surveillance.

Foucault also explores the relationship between power and individuality in his analysis of sexuality. According to Foucault, modern Western society has sought the truth about sex not in an *ars erotica*, in which pleasure is an end in itself, but rather in a science of sex, which converts pleasure into knowledge by encouraging people to talk about sex, and derives power from the accumulation of confidential statements.<sup>65</sup> The key to this science is the practice of confession, which has been detached from its origins in the sacrament of penance and elevated into a scientific method. Foucault finds the roots of this loquacity in the sixteenth century, both in the practices of self-examination developed by mystics and in the exhaustive rules prescribed for confessors following the Lateran Council, directing them to probe penitents with exacting questions about positions and sensations, and to monitor not only behavior but also fantasies and inclinations.<sup>66</sup> With the development of new technologies of the body in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, involving population control, the problem of childhood sexuality, and the psychiatric obsession with perversion, the confessional dynamic was transferred to other types of relationships, including those between doctors and patients, parents and children, and teachers and students. During the nineteenth century, scientific discourses about sexuality proliferated, connecting “the ancient injunction of confession with clinical listening methods” and employing a number of techniques to extract information, including interviews, questionnaires, hypnosis, introspection, and so on.<sup>67</sup> With this came an enormous interest in individual sexuality:

It is no longer a question of saying what was done—the sexual act—and how it was done; but of reconstructing, in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulation, and quality of the pleasure that animated it. For the first time no doubt, a society has taken upon itself to solicit and hear the imparting of individual pleasures.<sup>68</sup>

Foucault even explores the provocative notion that these scientific discourses on pleasure have become a “sublimated version” of the traditions of the *ars erotica*, in which the “‘pleasure of analysis’ (in the widest sense of the latter term)” becomes a substitute gratification.<sup>69</sup>

What a tantalizing prospect this offers for recontextualizing musical research and for understanding how another pleasurable activity has been transformed into discourse! Today there is an academic field, a cultural industry employing thousands of people, whose primary function is to generate discourse about music, whether through teaching, lecturing, or writing. Although people have discussed music for millennia and music teachers have talked about music to transmit traditions of composition and performance, the institutionalization of discourse about music is a relatively recent event and a cultural phenomenon in its own right. The first *Professor*



*ordinarius* of music at the University of Vienna, for example, was not appointed until 1870.<sup>70</sup> This institutionalization creates the potential for discourse about music to provide an independent satisfaction; one can indeed speak of a pleasure in music analysis, just as Foucault speaks of pleasure of analysis in the sciences of sex. Foucault's example invites us to consider musical research not only as a confessional science but also as a discreet form of *ars erotica*. Music has been colonized by numerous discourses that seek to control it, by language games designed to interrogate the composer, performer, or the listener, urging them to take us into their confidence, to confess their aural raptures, to disclose their most intimate thoughts and feelings, to force the musical ear to speak, to narrate its polymorphous pleasures, to leave nothing unsaid. In some discursive genres this character of interrogation and confession is relatively transparent. One thinks, for example, of the interview techniques used by ethnomusicologists in dealing with native informants, methods that have been applied to Western music as well. Sometimes the subject whom one interrogates is composite, as in experiments in music cognition, in which multiple test subjects are interviewed and the results collated, yielding norms within which individuals can be classified. Often the roles of the confessional dialogue are internalized in processes of self-examination. The autobiographical essay or statement of purpose that is often required for admission to graduate school belongs in this category. Although such essays are not intended for publication, any analysis of musical research as an institutional discourse must take them into account. Here, in a crucial rite of passage at the threshold of the discipline, we see many of the factors that Foucault associates with confession. In responding to questions implicitly or explicitly posed by the application, such as "Why do you want to become a musicologist?" (or ethnomusicologist or theorist), or "Describe your strengths and weaknesses," individuals are compelled to objectify themselves, to speak of their desires, placing themselves under surveillance in a situation characterized by unequal power relations. As strange as it may seem to link graduate applications to the history of sexuality and both to the sacrament of penance, such a defamiliarization may jolt us into questioning rituals long taken for granted.

There is no need to give Foucault the last word here, or to accept all his conclusions. Yet his analysis of power as dispersed, diffused, and anonymous seems well suited to describe the operation of power in academic fields. A network of power relations regulates academic discourse about music, yet no spider occupies the center of the web. The authority of those with relatively greater power depends on their submission to the same norms through which they classify others, so that one does not gain freedom as one ascends in a hierarchy until one's bonds become gossamer light. Foucault's insights into the interaction of norms and individuality, power and knowledge should enable us to realize that the social and historical contexts of knowledge cannot be detached from its production and consumption.

A common objection to Foucault, and one that must be taken seriously, is that his work seems to promote quietism: if power is all-pervasive, then there would seem to be no point at which to press for social change, particularly if the human subject itself is an effect of power. Judith Butler, however, in work that relies on a critical reading of Foucault, argues that just because the subject is constituted by discourse does not mean it is wholly determined by it.

Paradoxically, the reconceptualization of identity as an *effect*, that is, as *produced* or *generated*, opens up possibilities of “agency” that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed. For an identity to be an effect means that it is neither fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary. That the *constituted* status of identity is misconstrued along these two conflicting lines suggests the ways in which the feminist discourse on cultural construction remains trapped within the unnecessary binarism of free will and determinism. Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible.<sup>71</sup>

Paul Smith makes a similar point when he observes that the conflict among subject positions, the instability of identity, provides leverage for change and resistance to the present social order.<sup>72</sup>

This realization that we can indeed modify power relations prompts me to conclude this chapter on a hopeful note: we do not have to regard the present crisis of musical research as inevitable, we do not have to resign ourselves to it. In the next chapter I will begin to sketch some possible avenues for resistance and change. Any solution to the crisis, however, must consider its dual character, its paradoxical fusion of fragmentation and a forced consensus. How can we promote communication among rival factions without imposing such a counterfeit consensus? How can we respect the heterogeneity and variety of different positions without lapsing into relativism? What sort of individuality might there be without the coercive classifications created by norms? What sort of community might we imagine?

## 2

### SEARCH FOR AN ANTIMETHOD

#### *Begin at the Impasses*

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#### I

In the present crisis, we need neither new methods nor the continuation of the old but rather something like an antimethod that will ask how current methods work by examining their enabling conditions. Given the deadlock between opposing groups, and the impasses at which debates repeatedly seem to stall, I recommend starting at the impasses to see how they arise. Rather than build another tower, or another pyramid of truth, I want to occupy the space between existing structures, to inhabit the shadows, to map the labyrinth. Like Ariadne, then? Yes, like her I want to find a way through the maze, leaving a thread behind. Or like Ludwig Wittgenstein, who rejected the illusory progress that comes from erecting ever more elaborate systems of thought, claiming: "I am not so much interested in constructing a building, so much as in having a perspicuous view of the foundations of possible buildings."<sup>1</sup>

In seeking such a perspicuous view, however, I do not aspire to neutrality. On the contrary, I believe that decisions about methodology have ethical and political consequences, so that it is urgent to take responsibility for one's positions, to choose among competing values, and to act. But I feel that our options today are severely constrained by the potential of binary oppositions to structure the field of choices in advance, trapping us in false dichotomies. As Derrida has shown for the history of Western metaphysics, oppositions such as speech/writing, presence/absence, nature/culture, male/female, original/supplement, and so on, are not merely innocent classifications but impose "a violent hierarchy" in which one term dominates the other.<sup>2</sup> In the case of speech and writing, for example, speech has been treated as the privileged, central member of the dyad, while writing has been considered inferior and marginal. Speech has been connected to the presence of the voice as the guarantee of the speaker's meaning, while

writing has been treated as a derivative phenomenon, as a mere supplement to the fullness of speech, as its defective transcription.<sup>3</sup>

In musical research, factions tend to define themselves through such polarities, setting up hierarchies of value in which the privileged terms of one group become the subordinate terms of the other. Readers of musical discourse are frequently admonished that we need to elevate the autonomous composition over its historical and social contexts—or vice versa; that we must make the language of the field more evocative, more personal, more expressive—or that, on the contrary, we must purge it of all subjective elements; that we must aspire to mathematical exactitude—or abhor the sciences of number; that we must defend the traditional canons of Western music—or overthrow them—or dispense with the notion of canon altogether. These values can be described in terms of binary oppositions such as text/context, subjective/objective, structure/feeling, elite/popular, Western/non-Western, and so on. These terms are usually treated as external to each other. Thus context, for example, is generally conceived as the container, while the individual composition is treated as the thing contained.

As Derrida demonstrates, however, such polarities are not externally opposed. In the case of speech and writing, for example, he shows that speech depends on writing, because both depend upon the iterability of the linguistic sign. For something to function as a sign, it must be repeatable, capable of appearing in new contexts. But this introduces into speech many of the properties traditionally associated with writing: since signs can be repeated by other speakers, they can be quoted, detached from their original contexts, separated from the authenticating presence of the voice. Far from being externally opposed to writing, speech depends on a “proto-writing” or “arche-writing” (not to be confused with writing in the conventional sense of inscription)—on the iterability of the sign, without which neither speech nor writing would be possible. This dismantling of binary oppositions is what Derrida calls “deconstruction.” To continue with the example of speech/writing, deconstructing this opposition began with a temporary reversal of the hierarchy between the two terms, by showing that speech depends on writing. Merely reversing the hierarchy, however, is not enough, for this will ultimately establish another hierarchy. The temporary privileging of writing over speech was followed by a second phase that Derrida calls a “re-inscription” or “displacement” of the opposition, creating a third term, “proto-writing,” which is neither speech nor writing, producing the paradox of an originary supplement.<sup>4</sup> By allowing us to recognize the complicity of opposing positions, deconstruction gives us a new perspective on the paradox discussed in the previous chapter, showing how the proliferation of radically different languages and value systems that I called the Tower of Babel can coexist with its apparent opposite, the drive toward standardization and uniformity that I called the Ministry of Truth. Even though factions disagree about values, they share an unconscious commitment to the logic of binary oppositions, a logic that is inscribed in language itself:

“‘Everyday language’ is . . . the language of western metaphysics, and it carries with it not only a considerable number of presuppositions of all types, but also presuppositions inseparable from metaphysics, which, although little attended to, are knotted into a system.”<sup>5</sup>

To find options that are not even thinkable under the current system, we must undertake a critique of musical research. Unlike criticism, which seeks to evaluate things from an external perspective, critique acknowledges its own implication in its objects of study and thus the impossibility of a purely outside position.<sup>6</sup> The scope of such a critique cannot be limited in advance by traditional disciplinary boundaries but must include what John Mowitt calls a “critique of disciplinary reason,” using the Kantian echo to suggest that “disciplines cannot know the ‘object-itself,’ the condition of their knowing.”<sup>7</sup> The tradition begun by Kant, in which reason investigates itself, becoming both “the agent” and “the object of critique,” still provides a valuable model here.<sup>8</sup> Since Kant investigated the conditions that precede any possible experience, the categories that make experience possible, a critique of musical research along Kantian lines would shift focus from the direct study of musical experience to the conditions underlying it, asking “What makes musical experience possible?” We must modify the Kantian framework, however, to account for developments since his time. First we must expand the concept of critique to encompass language, recognizing that categories are not universal but are constructed in language. The crisis of musical research is a crisis of language, and it will be understood only through a critique of language. Such a critique would focus on statements about music, asking “What can be said about music?” or “What makes statements about music possible?” But this is still insufficient. In addition to recognizing the problem of language, we must also acknowledge the social and historical contingencies through which experience is constructed. Thus we can further revise the questions just posed to ask: “What are the historical and social conditions that make statements about music possible?” In taking socially situated statements about music as my object rather than “the music itself,” my project is a second-order study of musical discourse, a discourse about discourse.

This attention to discourse may seem a mere detour to those who believe that language is only a supplement that conveys information about music, and who consequently envision a subordinate role for language in musical research. It is easy to imagine a traditional scholar reacting to my work as follows:

Instead of talking about *music* as we do, you want to talk about talking about music. This may produce some interesting results, but taken to extremes, doesn’t it risk becoming a mere game, an intellectual exercise that will distract us from the task at hand, or a kind of endless foreplay that will postpone our aesthetic satisfaction indefinitely? We musicologists already feel belated; we know that our activity is secondary compared to music itself. All we do is

talk about music, using words, which we know are hopelessly inadequate. But your quest for a second-order discourse about music can only increase our alienation. We already feel like the men in Plato's allegory of the cave who were forced to watch the play of shadows on the walls instead of seeing the real objects; but you want to watch us watching the shadows. Rather than listen to music, you want to listen to us. Finally, it seems to me that you contradict yourself. In the previous chapter you warned about the dangers of abstraction. But by retreating from musical sounds to statements about music, you move from the concrete to the abstract, becoming one more layer removed from music itself. The purpose of musicology is to provide knowledge of musical experience. In the pursuit of this knowledge, language is only a means to an end, but you want to make it an end in itself.

As persuasive as such appeals to primary experience are, they ignore the extent to which musical experience—including our most spontaneous, private reactions to music, whether in casual or close listening—may already be abstract. While the ear must be a point of reference, it is not a sufficient basis for critique, because aural experience includes something inaudible, a social frame that can't be heard. In his analysis of the institution of the museum, Tony Bennett describes a certain relationship between the visible and the invisible in art galleries; viewing a series of paintings involves "*seeing through* those artefacts to see an invisible order of significance that they have been arranged to represent."<sup>9</sup> In music, also, there is a hidden order of significance; hearing involves *hearing through* the aural facts. Although musical research depends on an external referent that the discipline does not create, such referents, as Rudi Visker points out, are still discursively constructed.<sup>10</sup> The art historian Michael Baxandall captures this tension between the referent and our discursive constructions: "We do not explain pictures; we explain remarks about pictures—or rather, we explain pictures only in so far as we have considered them under some verbal description or specification."<sup>11</sup> Despite the potential to quantify aspects of pitch and rhythm, which gives some descriptions of music a precision that pictorial analysis may lack, we also explain remarks about compositions rather than the compositions themselves. If this is true, we are always already talking about talking about music.

The belief that we can escape this condition and engage the music without mediation depends on an attitude toward the relation between language and experience that Catherine Belsey calls "expressive realism." She characterizes this as a humanism connected to an idealist-empiricist epistemology. In expressive realism, "Man" is the center of all values, and language expresses or reflects the experience of a subject that exists outside language.<sup>12</sup> This attitude is so widely held that it may seem intuitively obvious, part of common sense, and it is as widespread among musical scholars as among the general population. As poststructuralists have explored the radical implications of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistics, however, this

view has become increasingly untenable. For Saussure, the linguistic sign has two components, the signifier (the sound image or written shape) and the signified (the concept). If language were merely a nomenclature that labels preexisting entities, we would expect the relationship between signifier and signified to be the same in all languages, but this is obviously not the case. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer explain:

One could just as easily use the sound signifier *arbre* as the signifier *tree* to unite with the concept of “tree.” But more than this, the signified is arbitrary as well. One could as easily define the concept “tree” by its woody quality (which would exclude palm trees) as by its size (which excludes the “low woody plants” we call *shrubs*). The relationship is not necessary because it is not based upon *inherent* qualities of signifier or signified.<sup>13</sup>

According to Saussure, then, language is a system of “differences *without positive terms*,”<sup>14</sup> so that no sign has value in itself; signifiers are defined by their relationship to other signifiers. Thus language does not merely report prelinguistic experience; it divides and preframes reality, creating the categories that make experience possible. This demolishes expressive realism. If we accept this reasoning, then we must reevaluate not only the status of language in musical research but also the category of experience. The assumption that musical experience is the starting point for investigation, and language merely a means of conveying the results, must give way to the realization that experience is already constructed in discourse. This is one reason why many recent feminists, for example, question the category of experience. As Joan Wallach Scott writes: “Experience is . . . not the origin of our explanation, but that which we want to explain.”<sup>15</sup>

## II

At this point a skeptic might interrupt my argument, addressing me as follows:

How can your attempt to interpret statements about music produce anything really new? After all, scholars read each other’s work all the time; presumably they do so with understanding. Or have they been reading in the dark, waiting for you to dazzle them with your Roman candles, your pyrotechnics? What do you know that they do not? How will your interpretations improve on theirs? What advantages can you offer, what keener insights?

To begin with, I do not claim any special authority or insight. The only advantage I can offer involves adopting a different perspective, looking in different places, for different things, unsettling our notions of what reading is and hence of how musicology works.



Traditional exegesis depends on the assumption that text and context constitute a unity, that a “proper” context exists that can control the reading process, screening out unintended meanings, bringing part and whole into a mutual adjustment. The drawbacks of this assumption become clear if we examine the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, whose advocacy of hermeneutics has provided an influential—and some would say conservative—defense of the humanities.<sup>16</sup> According to John Brenkman, the “fusion of horizons” between past and present understandings that Gadamer considers the goal of the hermeneutic encounter presupposes a unified community of interpreters in the present; Gadamer empties “the ‘historical situation of the interpreter’ of all specificity . . . [referring] to all potential interpreters in contemporary society as an undifferentiated ‘we’ unmarked by class, race, or gender and unaffected by any concrete social interests or ideological commitments.”<sup>17</sup> By ignoring differences within the present, Gadamer denies the politics of interpretation, the struggle over meaning. Brenkman wants to rethink traditional hermeneutics, producing a critical hermeneutics that will not take the unity of part and whole for granted. This may provide a point of overlap between the critical theory of society of the Frankfurt School and the concerns of more experimental modes of critique, including deconstruction.

My approach to reading, then, begins by recognizing the intertextual networks in which statements about music function. At first glance, one might be tempted to dismiss the term “intertextuality” as mere jargon, yet it is a vital concept. Although traditional source criticism has long enumerated borrowings, quotations, allusions, and parody among works, intertextuality goes beyond these to embrace the sort of anonymous citationality that Roland Barthes calls the *déjà lu*, the already read, that is, the effect of textual codes that operate in an impersonal manner over many texts but have no origin.<sup>18</sup> Thus intertextuality signals a movement that Barthes calls “from work to text”—from thinking in terms of entities to recognizing mobile fields of relations. This flexibility accounts for the widespread dissemination of the term after Julia Kristeva coined it in 1966.<sup>19</sup> It has been extended to many other domains; Laclau and Mouffe, for example, speak of social intertextuality,<sup>20</sup> while Michael Baxandall speaks of “interpictoriality.”<sup>21</sup> This movement from entities to relations, moreover, extends far beyond literary studies. Just as Saussure argued that meaning arises from the whole chain of signifiers rather than inhering in any single one, intertextual approaches suggest that meaning occurs *between* texts, not *within* them. This movement from entities to relations, moreover, extends far beyond the study of language. According to Michel Serres, Western philosophy has traditionally thought in terms of nouns or verbs, choosing a substantive such as God, Being, or Time, or an action such as thinking, willing or perceiving, on which to base itself. Serres wants to create a philosophy of prepositions—between, among, around, within, next to . . .—that will capture the fluid, relational character of life.<sup>22</sup>



Although intertextuality may resemble a conspiracy to deny all unity and coherence, such fears are misplaced. When Francis Barker, for example, calls *Hamlet* “a contradictory, transitional text,”<sup>23</sup> it does not suddenly degenerate into nonsense; the words remain comprehensible; a line such as “I am but mad north-north-west” does not suffer a sea-change, mutating into “colorless green ideas sleep furiously.” Logical or grammatical coherence is not the issue. It is a question of acknowledging *other unities*, other sources of coherence, that may cut across and subvert those we have been trained to recognize. In speaking of the ideology of the abstract, for example, I created a context in which a number of previously separate activities could be “read” together within a single category: not only the abstracts that often accompany scholarly articles but also curricula vitae, faculty activities reports, autobiographical statements, peer reviews, tenure dossiers, and even the activities of academic organizations, including those of committees on professional development. In showing how these function as methods of self-surveillance within an increasingly bureaucratized profession, they become part of a larger whole that only appears if we violate the self-contained quality of the “parts.”

Indeed, one point of convergence among otherwise diverse approaches to language in the twentieth century and beyond consists in the search for units of meaning (or functions) that go beyond those of grammar, which deals with the unity of the sentence, and logic, which deals with that of the proposition. Foucault, for example, carefully differentiates statements in discursive formations from the unities of grammar or logic: “The statement . . . is not an elementary unity that can be added to the unities described by grammar or logic.”<sup>24</sup> Or consider Bakhtin’s concept of the utterance. Whereas a sentence constitutes an abstract unity that can be repeated in new contexts, an utterance cannot be separated from the specific social situation in which it appears; repeating an utterance creates a new utterance.<sup>25</sup> As a final example, consider Hayden White’s extended concept of tropes. A trope is a departure from literal usage that substitutes one word for another, as when I call a coward a chicken. White extends this concept, however, to deal with entire discourses, so that one can think in one or another tropological mode. Metaphor, for instance, is the trope that compares two different things,  $A = B$ , coward = chicken. Thinking in the mode of metaphor involves searching for resemblances among different phenomena. Other tropes, such as metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, can also be inflated in this manner.<sup>26</sup>

Having identified these larger textual units or functions, we can seek to compare them through what David Herman calls a “secondary grammar.” In contrast to primary grammars, which deal with language at the level of sentences, secondary grammars deal with text-sized units and try to establish “a metasyntax of textual relations.”<sup>27</sup> Herman discusses several thinkers who have contributed to such a project, including Derrida and Gilles

Deleuze and Félix Guattari. We could add Bakhtin to this group; he wanted to establish a “metalinguistics” that would compare utterances as wholes.<sup>28</sup>

A second-order grammar does not mean that discourses can be directly translated into each other. As Lyotard observes, for example, language games may operate via heterogeneous rules: “language games are not translatable, because, if they were, they would not be language games. It is as if one wanted to translate the rules and strategies of chess into those of checkers.”<sup>29</sup> Thus White’s tropes, for instance, are not equivalent: thinking in the mode of metaphor, with its search for similarities in difference, is quite different from metonymy, which stresses dispersion and differentiation. What we can do, however, is describe the rules by which different ways of talking about music operate, to see how conflicts arise. Moreover, since second-order grammars are both *means* of comparing texts as well as themselves *being* texts, they can be used to illuminate and critique each other (as when White uses his tropology to interpret Foucault’s concept of the episteme).<sup>30</sup> This flexibility and self-critical potential will prevent my readings from congealing into a ready-made method.

Since these interpretive strategies may sometimes violate an author’s apparent intentions, they may seem counterintuitive or even perverse. Rather than ignore intentionality, however, I want to recognize what Barbara Johnson calls “the functioning of many different, sometimes incommensurable *kinds* of intentionality”<sup>31</sup> that result from language exceeding an individual’s control. I regard the efforts of musical research as cultural texts, embedded in social and historical contexts, and thus as having a collective component. Scholars may hesitate to view their work in this way, preferring to consider their ideas wholly their own, the product of their free choices. In their analysis of academic labor, Stefano Harney and Frederick Moten list a number of factors that reinforce this “image of solitary self-possession,” including “the absence of immediate supervision; the luster of authorial imprimatur; the seemingly discrete sites of production; and most important, what at first sight appears as the disarticulation of knowledge production from circulation and consumption.”<sup>32</sup> Sometimes the evidence for the collective aspect of scholarship is hidden in plain sight, like the purloined letter in Poe’s tale. The practice of signing academic articles with both one’s own name and that of one’s university, for example, is a tacit acknowledgment that the institution speaks alongside or through one. And of course, scholarship participates in many other social contexts as well. Bakhtin’s idea that utterances form a “dialogic chain,”<sup>33</sup> continually responding to past utterances while anticipating their future reception, seems especially appropriate for scholarly work, which constantly cites prior discourse while seeking to defuse potential criticism. In this dialogic process, we are sometimes authors, but we are also intermediaries, passing on socially constituted messages; we are couriers, Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern bearing fatal letters under seal.

### III

The skeptic has been waiting patiently to voice some further objections:

In relying upon notions of textuality and intertextuality, isn't there a danger that you will impose models on music from outside? After all, doesn't the concept of the text come from literary criticism? Many musicians have argued that it may be misleading to apply ideas developed in other fields to music, which has unique problems. Indeed, at a recent meeting of the SMT, a prominent music theorist remarked that "literary critics are bums." Given these reservations, should we cede so much authority to literary criticism?

Actually, the text has never been the exclusive property of literary criticism. Barthes describes the text as arising from the interaction of a number of disciplines, including "linguistics, anthropology, Marxism, and psychoanalysis . . . from their encounter in relation to an object which traditionally is the province of none of them."<sup>34</sup> Thus the text originated as an interdisciplinary object. Indeed, Mowitt considers it an "antidisciplinary object" because it belongs to the critique of disciplinary reason.<sup>35</sup> What is at stake in models of textuality is not merely different readings of cultural objects but the frameworks in which interpretation becomes possible:

Thus, the 'plural' character of the text (cf. Barthes) has less to do with some bland notion of multiple meanings, than with an empowerment that enables our constructions to be ceaselessly challenged—not merely contested at the level of conclusions, but subverted at the level of disciplinary legitimization.<sup>36</sup>

Far from securing the hegemony of literary criticism, the encounter with textuality has had the opposite effect, because it forced critics to question their objects of study. If literary criticism or theory has any authority, it is of a paradoxical sort: it is exemplary only because it has placed its own authority in doubt.

A similar decentering has the potential to reconfigure the disciplines that study music, both in their relation to each other and to the disciplines "outside" music. Music studies will become postdisciplinary.<sup>37</sup> I prefer this term to others such as *interdisciplinary*, *transdisciplinary*, *crossdisciplinary*, or *multidisciplinary*, all of which suggest that disciplines have definite boundaries that can be crossed or violated, that they are first constituted as distinct entities and only subsequently combined. This can set up the expectation that one discipline will act as a privileged model or master discipline for the others. By using the term "postdisciplinary," I intend to question how disciplinary boundaries are imposed in the first place. I share Dominick LaCapra's desire for a more radical approach:

Indeed contemporary critics are no longer content with interdisciplinary efforts that simply combine, compare, or synthetically unify the methods of existing academic disciplines. Their questioning of established disciplines both raises doubts about internal criteria of purity and autonomy and unsettles the boundaries and protocols of given fields. Criticism in this sense is a discursive agitation running across a variety of disciplines and having an uneasy relation to its own institutionalization.<sup>38</sup>

A key figure in rethinking the status of disciplines has been Foucault. As he points out, the persistence of a disciplinary name over time may conceal profound discontinuities in the object of knowledge. Thus he warns, for example, against assuming that eighteenth-century natural history and nineteenth-century biology study the same object. Biology is the study of life, but the concept of life as such did not exist in the eighteenth century, which recognized a continuum of natural forms with no clear break between the animate and the inanimate.<sup>39</sup> Instead of taking the identity of disciplines for granted, Foucault asks how they form their objects. In the case of biology, for example, Gary Gutting remarks that Foucault

deals not only with first-order biological concepts but also with the concepts that define the conditions of possibility for formulating such concepts. . . . For Foucault, the possibility of the entire conceptual development of any given discipline is based on deeper concepts, shared by other disciplines, and themselves subject to transformations over time that are not controlled by any discipline.<sup>40</sup>

Even the same statements can mean radically different things when they appear in different discursive formations, so that the appearance of similarity can be deceptive.

For musical research to be “pure,” autonomous, centered, its object would have to possess an essential nature, so that we could say what belongs to music, what is proper to music. We might conceive this essence as a starting point on which we agree, or as a goal that the field is trying to discover, a limit that the discipline asymptotically approaches. But such an essence does not exist. It is not merely that we are reluctant to define music nowadays or that we prefer to speak of “musics” in the plural. Any definition of music has meaning only within a relational and ever-changing network of disciplines. Statements such as “music is the language of the passions,” for example, do not indicate some timeless essence, some unchanging truth about music. The meaning of the statement, and thus your understanding of music, changes with the disciplinary space within which you understand “language” and “passions.” Language does not mean the same thing to Augustine that it means to Noam Chomsky: it is theorized differently in eighteenth-century General Grammar, nineteenth-century philology, and Saussurean linguistics. The passions do not mean the same

thing to Aristotle that they did to twentieth-century behaviorists. (Are they “states of the soul” or “chemical alterations in the body”?) Rather than worry about the purity of the field, then, we ought to recognize that music is always already postdisciplinary; it forms its objects with the aid of other disciplines, which are themselves in flux.

Thus the fear that we will contaminate music by importing concepts, such as that of textuality, from “outside” the field misses the radical potential of textuality to scramble our categories, to force us to rethink the inside/outside polarities on which our anxieties of disciplinary purity depend. This is why a critique is needed, so that we can reconstitute our discipline rather than simply adding new ideas to existing methodologies. Embellishing musical research as it currently stands with, say, the terminology of Derrida’s deconstruction of Western metaphysics seems a useless encumbrance, like forcing someone to walk on stilts. As Derrida has tirelessly repeated, deconstruction is not a method that can be “appropriated” or “applied”<sup>41</sup> but is already at work in texts themselves and in their social, institutional, and material prolongations. Rather than “applying” deconstruction to music, we need to discover how a system of binary oppositions already organizes—or rather disorganizes—the field from within; in effect, we need to discover that we are already walking on stilts.

#### IV

This fear of disciplinary contamination, of crossing borders, which the notion of textuality can provoke, signals a deeper anxiety, because more than the destiny of our disciplinary *objects* is at stake. The questioning of closure and unity extends to that of the *subject* as well: the lack or the excess of meaning that disrupts the identity of the text also prevents *us* from coinciding with ourselves, from being self-identical. If “any text,” to quote Julia Kristeva, “is constructed as a mosaic of quotations,”<sup>42</sup> then the subject is also a patchwork, a collage, as Barthes explains: “This ‘I’ which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost).”<sup>43</sup> This poststructuralist critique of the subject need not result in chaos. Laclau and Mouffe stress that we must avoid not only the “essentialism of the totality” that would absolutize a transcendental subject, but also an “essentialism of the elements” that would absolutize the separation of subject positions: “analysis cannot simply remain at the moment of *dispersion*, given that ‘human identity’ involves not merely an ensemble of dispersed positions but also the forms of over-determination existing among them.”<sup>44</sup>

In Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory—which I will address more fully in chapter 3—the ego misrecognizes the sources of its identity, projecting its own alienation, its own lack, onto others.<sup>45</sup> In a provocative feminist extension of Lacan, Theresa Brennan argues that his theory represents a histori-

cally specific form of subjectivity dating roughly from the time of Descartes. During this period, which she calls “the ego’s era,” the ego has maintained an exaggerated sense of autonomy and frequently projects its own rigidity onto objects.<sup>46</sup> The fantasy of the self as a bounded container or entity may also underlie disciplinary desires for autonomy.

This rethinking of subjectivity has radical implications for musical research, or for any discipline that seeks to derive its authority from works of art, because of the historical connections between aesthetics and subjectivity. Prior to the second half of the eighteenth century, aesthetics did not exist as an independent region of philosophy. Andrew Bowie links the rise of aesthetics to “the growing centrality of subjectivity in modern societies”;<sup>47</sup> understanding how human beings could find beauty and order in nature or in their own creations became more and more important in the absence of theological guarantees. Terry Eagleton has proposed a social and material basis to these seemingly abstract speculations about art; for Eagleton, the aesthetic forms a “surrogate discourse” in which the apparent unity and autonomy of the work of art offered a compelling model for an emerging bourgeois subject:

Conception of the unity and integrity of the work of art . . . are common-places of an “aesthetic” discourse which stretches back to classical antiquity; but what emerges from such familiar notions in the late eighteenth century is the curious idea of the work of art as a kind of *subject*. It is to be sure, a peculiar kind of subject, this newly defined artefact, but it is a subject nonetheless. And the historical pressures which give rise to such a strange style of thought, unlike concepts of aesthetic unity or autonomy in general, by no means extend back to the epoch of Aristotle.<sup>48</sup>

Here Eagleton’s language works to defamiliarize the banal concept of aesthetic unity by calling the analogy between the artwork and the human subject a “*curious idea*” that produces “a *peculiar* kind of subject” and “a *strange* style of thought” (emphases mine). Later he makes the familiar still stranger when he invents an odd term, “cryptosubjectivity,” to describe this conjunction of aesthetics and subjectivity.<sup>49</sup> This cryptosubjectivity demanded a greater investment in unity than had earlier traditions. In the rhetorical tradition, for example, analogies between the form of an oration and that of the human body were recognized as suggestive metaphors, and the unity sought served merely pragmatic ends; later, however, there was a tendency to literalize such metaphors, to believe that the artwork might really achieve the wholeness of a natural process, thus reconciling opposites such as the division between mind and nature, subject and object, words and things, and so on. The notion of aesthetic unity, then, is not a historically unified or invariant concept; through the cryptosubjectivity that Eagleton describes, unity was forced to serve new ideological ends, becoming a symbol or prop for the often precarious identity of the individual. To

the extent that this subject was conceived in opposition to society, as monologic and self-contained rather than socially produced, the artwork was called on to play an ideological role beyond the power of any artefact to achieve.

This tendency to use art to recover stable and reassuring images of selfhood was heightened by the romantic “secularization of the sacred” to which M. H. Abrams has called attention.<sup>50</sup> With the increasing skepticism toward traditional religion, many of the properties of religious experience were transferred to the secular realm and particularly to the work of art. Thomas McFarland describes the “numinous transfer of the predicates of the soul” to a complex of terms that includes not only “organicism” but also “genius,” “originality,” “imagination,” “symbol,” and “the sublime.”<sup>51</sup> Just as theology had considered the soul to be immortal, unique, indivisible, autonomous, free, and so on, aesthetics began to find these properties in the work of art. Since most current critical methods for dealing with the arts originated during the romantic era, it is not surprising that such attitudes continue to haunt our discourse. (Indeed, as Paul de Man reminds us, “the main points around which contemporary methodological and ideological arguments circle can almost always be traced directly back to the romantic heritage.”)<sup>52</sup> This is not, however, to blame everything on romanticism or to see it as the source of all our mystifications. The most self-conscious of romantic poets and philosophers raised these issues concerning the critique of the subject, the relationship between aesthetics and subjectivity, and so on. Their insights, however, were often betrayed by subsequent generations: “it might be that between the later eighteenth century and ourselves stands a long period that is regressive, in terms of self-insight, in relation to romanticism.”<sup>53</sup>

The doctrine of the autonomous work of art, then, is merely a detour through which aesthetic ideology seeks its real *jouissance*: the autonomy of the human subject. In arguments about musical unity, it is our unity as subjects that is often at stake (hence the passion that frequently attends such arguments.) The role of the subject, however, has been so effectively camouflaged that even many astute critics, who have questioned the fetishization of the autonomous work, may not recognize the connection of this critique with that of the subject and may fail to consider how the critique of the subject might influence their own writing.

Moreover, the doctrine of the autonomous work is not the only place where aesthetic ideology can produce mystification. One can just as well seek closure at the level of context as in the individual text, ascribing a kind of organic unity, for example, to a historical period or to a particular mode of social organization. In general, the ancient image of the cosmos as a series of concentric circles or spheres still constrains our thinking here. We tend, that is, to imagine a hierarchy of contexts that envelops the individual composition in progressively larger containers, rather like a set of Russian



dolls nesting neatly one inside another. We usually classify a piece within a limited number of series, usually either that formed by works having the same title (works in the same genre) or the same signature (works belonging to a composer's oeuvre.) At the next level, we might collect the work of a group of composers into a period style; ascending still further in the hierarchy, we might consider the social context of a period. You can place your "God term" (Kenneth Burke) at the center or the periphery, you can contract to a point in your desire to reach the essence of an individual composition, or you can expand to the edges of your mental universe in your quest for ever larger contextual frames, but you're still moving within the series of what I have elsewhere called "privileged contexts."<sup>54</sup> Thus the appeal to context does not necessarily escape the ideological impasses of the search for "the music itself." That is why Foucault urged that we "suspend the unities" by which we organize discourse, including those of the book, the oeuvre, tradition, influence, the spirit of an age, and so on.<sup>55</sup> He also warned of the tendency to represent history as the experience of a single individual, as if there were a subject-writ-large for whom the historical spectacle is staged; both "the linear model of speech" and "the model of the stream of consciousness" in historical writing tend to favor continuity over discontinuity, ignoring both the ruptures and gaps in history as well as the simultaneity of different temporalities.<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth points out that the idea "of time as a neutral homogeneous medium" in which all events can be compared is a relatively recent invention that coincides with the birth of the Cartesian subject and the invention of perspective in painting.<sup>57</sup> These reifications of context can apply to social contexts as well; according to Žižek, the notion of society as an organic whole is the ideological fantasy par excellence.<sup>58</sup>

The self-identical subject, the autonomous composition, and the hierarchy of contexts, then, can be regarded as transformations of each other; we could represent these correspondences as a triangle that encloses the space of musical research (see fig. 2.1). This triangle, which should be regarded heuristically, from the perspective of its explanatory power, might be called the Bermuda Triangle of Aesthetic Ideology. Like the fabled region in the Atlantic, it is a mystified zone, where compasses spin in circles; often you can't escape because you don't know you're there. Here the sirens sing a threefold song: even if you resist the allure of exaggerated claims for the autonomy of the composition, the hierarchy of contexts still beckons you; even if you pour wax into your ears, the third siren—which is the voice of the ego—serenades you from within. The key to the transformations is the desire to be self-identical, or what Lacan calls the desire "to be me to myself" (*m'être à moi-même*, which puns on *maître à moi-même*, "to be master to myself").

To escape this triangle, even in a provisional way, we must radically revise our notions about the subject, texts, and contexts, decentering both the



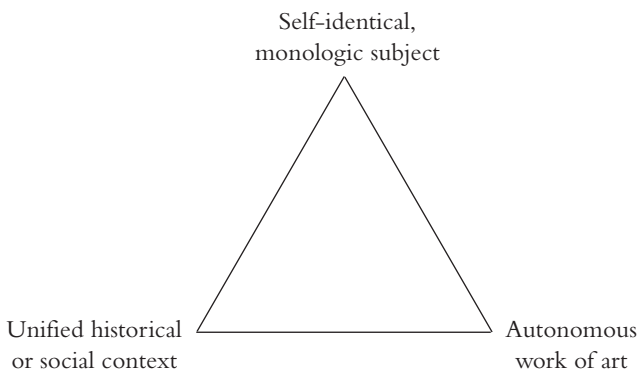


Figure 2.1. The Bermuda Triangle of Aesthetic Ideology.

subject of musical research and its objects, recognizing the divided nature of our discourse. This division, this split in identity should not be regarded as something we might supersede; there is a crack in human identity that we ignore at our peril. Instead of continuing to nurture illusions of wholeness, we must prolong, in the words of Joan Copjec, “the conflict with ourselves,” obeying what she calls “the sole moral maxim of psychoanalysis . . . do not surrender your internal conflict, your division.”<sup>59</sup>

## V

The second part of this book is organized as a voyage around the Bermuda Triangle, with separate chapters devoted to the subject of musical research and to its objects; this strategy allows me to map the disciplinary space of the field in an economical manner, displaying its internal logic while also suggesting how to search for alternatives. Thus in chapter 3 I explore how disciplinary identities emerge through what I call *narratives of disciplinary legitimation*. Understanding these narratives and the sort of cultural work they perform will require vigilant reading of contemporary musical research along with the development of strong yet flexible theoretical models. A theoretically informed practice of reading is needed because once we abandon essentializing ideas of human identity, questions of who is speaking and who is being addressed in a text become complex. Judith Butler draws attention to this complexity when she asks: “What speaks when ‘I’ speak to you? What are the institutional histories of subjection and subjectivation that ‘position’ me here and now?”<sup>60</sup>

Although I seek to encourage change by transforming the ways we conceive and construct disciplinary identities, I do not wish to impose any single ideal as a goal. In this respect I share the ethical values that Lacan advo-

cated for psychoanalysis; the analyst should avoid offering his or her own ego as a model for the analysand's, seeking instead "to obtain absolute difference," to foster the emergence of the analysand's unique truth.<sup>61</sup> By bringing out the conflicts between our ideals and our unconscious fantasies, and disclosing our submission to the master signifiers of others, psychoanalysis offers paths for us to dissolve our identifications and to reconfigure our fantasies. Mark Bracher has suggested that cultural criticism should adopt a similar attitude: "The mode of analysis I am proposing refers the audience to its own desire—embodied in the fantasies imbricated in its own response—as the basis upon which the audience could establish new master signifiers."<sup>62</sup> This ethical refusal to dominate others seems especially needed in academic communities, where gaining the right to speak often entails reproducing existing paradigms that confer a ready-made identity, and where even oppositional discourses that rebel against the status quo risk developing their own orthodoxies. To counter this by offering another ready-made subject position, however novel, seems futile. Rather than take sides with any particular authorial position, therefore, I want to understand what makes an authorial point of view possible. How might we conceptualize and describe differences among points of view? How do discourses arouse and satisfy desire and thus solicit identification with a position? How do conflicts within a discourse permit the same text to provoke multiple responses, fostering resistance as well as identification?

In chapters 4 and 5 I turn from the subject to the objects of musical research. Here Derrida's work will provide a point of departure by inviting us, as Dominick LaCapra explains, "to reformulate the entire problem of the relationship between 'texts' and 'contexts' that may take one further in directions Derrida has at least traced."<sup>63</sup> The identity of any text depends on context, but context is always unstable; the conditions of possibility for meaning are also its conditions of impossibility, because the iterability of any sign, its capacity for being cited, allows it to "break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts."<sup>64</sup> This does not condemn us to a paralyzing skepticism. Here Mark Wigley usefully counters the widespread misconception that Derrida promotes a vague and generalized indeterminacy, "a sense that decisions can never be made." On the contrary, Wigley insists that "decisions are always made, not in spite of an unavoidable indeterminacy, but on its very basis."<sup>65</sup> We can therefore investigate how decisions about the identity of texts and contexts are made in practice, to see how disciplinary objects are constructed.

This word "constructed," however, can produce new mystifications unless we specify exactly how such constructions take place. A key problem in chapters 4 and 5, therefore, will be to analyze representative texts of contemporary musical research in terms of their underlying explanatory models. Through such analysis I hope to demonstrate the deep complicity between those who advocate study of "the music itself" and those who believe

priority should be given to the study of context, because profound similarities govern the models used to construct both text and context. (Here I am tempted to parody a familiar poem by Wallace Stevens, "The Indigo Glass in the Grass": Text or context, which of these truly contains the music? Neither the one, nor the other, nor the two together.) Rather than take sides in the text/context debate or try to engineer a compromise between their positions, we need to shift to an entirely new range of questions, including the following: What makes any particular construction of text or context possible? Whose interests do such constructions serve? How might they be constructed differently?

In part III, I consider other complex sets of cultural conditions that affect statements about music, beginning, in chapter 6, with questions about technology: How do various communications media—technologies, from the book to the computer, that store, transmit, or process symbols, images, and sounds—affect what can be said about music? How do such media, by creating new modes of thinking, perceiving, and feeling, new ways of conceptualizing time, space, memory, and ourselves, change the frameworks within which musical research operates? Here we must recognize the event to which Friedrich Kittler calls attention: once machines, such as film and sound recording, began to "conquer functions of the central nervous system,"<sup>66</sup> imitating, but also extending, perceptual processes, technology was no longer something that affected the environment while leaving *us* intact. As Kittler remarks, the separation of media around the 1880s created the preconditions for the emergence of new fields and new disciplinary objects. The invention of the phonograph, for example, prepared the way for a transformation in linguistics by differentiating the sonic material of language from its informational content: "Edison's phonograph . . . allows for the possibility of a methodological, distinct separation between the real and the symbolic, between phonetics and phonology."<sup>67</sup> Such technical developments have also changed musical scholarship. An obvious example involves the emergence of ethnomusicology as a discipline; the very objects it studies were made available by the advent of sound recording, as Charles Keil acknowledges: "freezing musical processes from the oral-aural traditions as objects of study was a precondition and remains an essential, if largely taken for granted, frame of reference."<sup>68</sup> Ethnomusicology continues to utilize technical advances, including photographs, film, and video. The appearance of on-line journals, e-mail lists, and websites in all branches of musical scholarship provide other instances where media have affected research.

But the effects of technology that concern me here are both more subtle and more pervasive: I want to rethink the conditions under which we write about music by recognizing, with Derrida, that writing does not simply record a prior state of consciousness; today consciousness itself is produced through media conditions. In a sense, this has always been the case, since

consciousness, as John Johnston observes, is “the interiorized reflection of current media standards.”<sup>69</sup> Just as we once conceived the mind as a wax tablet that receives impressions or as a mirror that reflects the world, now we tend to imagine it as a computer that processes information or as a network of computers. Now more than ever, perception is already filtered through machines; cinema has altered the way we view reality; we watch television from our infancy to our dotage; computerized data banks keep us under constant surveillance.

Musical research already constitutes an interface between at least two media, forming a membrane between music and writing. In chapter 6 I will suggest that our participation in postmodern culture makes that interface potentially more complex, positioning scholarship at the intersection of multiple media. Through close readings of recent scholarship, I will demonstrate how the internalization of technology forms a condition of possibility for statements about music, regardless of whether technology is explicitly thematized or not. This is not to say that such technologies determine the content of research; but they open a field of possibilities, a horizon of choices.

In chapter 7, I will consider how social antagonisms produce cultural double binds, moments when individuals are caught between different communities and languages that both *refuse*—and yet somehow *demand*—integration. In ethnomusicology, for example, such cases may arise when the history of colonialism contaminates the very methodology through which one studies oppressed cultures, leaving one without a language in which to engage the other while feeling a disciplinary imperative that one must engage the other. Or in feminist musicology, one encounters what some have called the aporias of feminism: by exposing the masculinist biases that underlie allegedly universal forms of subjectivity, for example, does feminism risk leaving women without a subject position from which to speak? In a sense, this sort of irreducible conflict characterizes the crisis of musical research today, but such conflicts occur not only among factions but even within a single individual.

Finally, in chapter 8, I shall argue that the crisis of musical research is ultimately an ethical crisis: When we reduce others to representatives of factions, we objectify them and their language; when we submit to the forced consensus of the ideology of the abstract, we objectify ourselves. Faced with this dilemma, the critique of musicology must draw its energy from an ethical commitment, from a commitment to justice. How can we do justice to music, to others, and to ourselves today? The difficulty of answering this question is compounded when we realize, as Lyotard reminds us, that we must not assume that we already know what justice is; justice is the object of an idea, to which no concept is adequate.<sup>70</sup> But I am not concerned here with finding definitive answers. I want to raise questions that will prevent us from escaping into any ready-made method for manufacturing “new” research.

## VI

—Doesn't a certain irony underlie your whole project? On the one hand you complain of a crisis of discourse in which rival factions are talking past each other; you compare the current state of musical research, perhaps somewhat melodramatically, to a Tower of Babel. Yet you yourself introduce a number of language games that may be unfamiliar to some of your readers. Won't this proliferation of specialized languages alienate part of your audience? Isn't there a danger that you will exacerbate problems of communication rather than solving them? How, then, can this be a cure for the ailments you have diagnosed? Can the same thing function as both poison and antidote?

—Since any attempt to intervene in a crisis of communication would seem to require experimentation and fresh ideas, the question is whether my injection of an unfamiliar critical discourse will constitute a fatal dose or an inoculation that will produce antibodies. In the Tower of Babel, each faction tends to privilege and naturalize its own perspective, treating its own disciplinary conventions as authoritative. By opening discourses up to what deconstruction calls their "constitutive outside," I hope to demonstrate the contingency of existing paradigms, undermining their ability to determine the horizon within which thinking is confined. So while I certainly recognize the irony of which you speak, I believe there's a difference as well.

—But if you're trying to demonstrate the contingency and particularity of disciplinary languages, it seems to me you run into another paradox: any critical paradigm you devise for such a purpose can only be contingent itself. Your own language is just as contingent as any other, and you become vulnerable to your own critique, sawing off the branch on which you're sitting.

—We must embrace this paradox, because we are part of the culture we critique. Analyzing the social and historical conditions of possibility that authorize statements about music produces new statements that can also be analyzed, so that when I speak of an antimethod, I see it working against *itself* as much as against other methods, resisting its own closure, so there is nothing in this book that could not be turned against the book itself in a continuing process of autocritique.

One reason I engage a number of critical models, working with deconstruction, semiotics, narrative theory, psychoanalysis, feminism, historiography, political philosophy, and so on, is because I see their potential not only to critique musical research, but also to critique and correct each other. This is an incomplete activity, making critique an ongoing process rather than a stage that will be superseded by arriving at a new orthodoxy or consensus. Critique becomes a continuous transformative dialogue with other positions, in which the contingency of its own operation is affirmed.

—But if all disciplinary languages are contingent, there is no reason to prefer one to the other. This would seem to doom your project from the start, leaving you with no grounds for critique and condemning us to relativism.

—Since critique as I conceive it begins by exposing the collective cultural networks within which statements about music function, I oppose the sort of relativism that sees all positions as equally valid and reduces them to matters

of individual opinion. Like Adorno, I reject relativism because it represents “a limited form of consciousness” that originates in the bourgeois dogma that regards the individual consciousness as self-sufficient.<sup>71</sup> This realization, moreover, does not entail embracing absolutism; just as we must resist any enclosure in a purely individualistic perspective, we must renounce the quest to command a godlike view.

—Having attacked relativism a moment ago, let me now say a word in its favor. Some people would make the argument that accepting relativism is the only way to accommodate diversity, the only means to guarantee respect for all points of view, the only path to pluralism. Pluralism, moreover, is not some accidental feature of contemporary life that we might avoid by embracing some new monism. According to Claude Lefort, the modern form of democracy represents more than a new form of government: it involves a profound change in social consciousness in which people can pursue radically different ideas of the good life.<sup>72</sup> So pluralism is not only a social reality that is here to stay but, I think you’d agree, constitutes an advance in human freedom.

—Yes.

—Inevitably this pluralism pervades all aspects of culture, including academic fields. In musical research, which is our primary focus here, it appears not only through the vast differences in musical tastes today but also in the disparate values that govern the priorities and goals of scholarship. Since these values are often incommensurable and frequently come into conflict, perhaps what we need is not a critique but a *laissez-faire* attitude that would honor all points of view and promote inclusiveness. Yes, there are impasses between factions, but we must accept them, not only because we have no grounds for deciding among conflicting values but also in the interest of diversity, which seems to be the only value most of us share. How can you cherish pluralism, then, and be against relativism?

—Another feature of contemporary life goes hand in hand with this plural conception of the good, and undermines the adequacy of any mere relativism or policy of noninterference as a solution to the politics of interpretation: the decentering of identity (already mentioned in chapter 1) produced by our participation in multiple and overlapping subcommunities based on race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, religion, politics, family, profession, leisure pursuits, and so on. Because of this hybrid and contradictory character of social identity, the plural goods of modern life are not merely choices that differentiate one individual from another; we continually negotiate among these incommensurable goods as we construct our identities. Rather than conceptualize interpretive positions as choices that merely satisfy the interests of pre-constituted individuals, we need a new ontology if we are to break the impasses. Laclau and Mouffe find such an ontology in Saussure’s linguistics; because “each ensemble of subject positions” resembles “an incomplete linguistic system” in which the addition of a new element modifies all the others, they conceptualize identities as relational rather than referential. We might extend their project of a radical democratic pluralism to provide a provocative model for rethinking the poli-

tics of interpretation, because they imagine “participatory mechanisms through which rigid and antagonistic subject positions might be transformed by their interaction with other subject positions.”<sup>73</sup> A genuine pluralism, whether in politics or in the humanities, is a strenuous achievement, an active process that demands constant vigilance if positions are to remain open to dialogue and change. We do not have to settle for a passive relativism or a flimsy tolerance that simply affirms all positions as they stand or absolutizes the perspective of each isolated individual or faction.

—I am still troubled by contradictions. You accuse musical scholarship of a cult of the abstract. By putting knowledge into a portable form, into a format that can be summarized and paraphrased, it becomes a commodity. Abstracts circulate like money, like coinage passed from hand to hand. The type of work that is successful, that is encouraged, depends on its susceptibility to this sort of summary. I hope I have adequately summarized your position. Yet how can one escape this tendency? Again, you seem to contradict yourself, because your project of a second-order discourse about music would seem to depend on abstracts just as much as other work in the field. This is true in at least three respects. (1) Your account of musical scholarship has to be selective. Since it is impossible to read everything, or to discuss everything, you must choose certain statements for analysis that you consider representative of the field; this very process of selection is a kind of summary. (2) You have to provide a digest of what you think a particular text is saying. (3) From time to time, if only for the sake of clarity, you must summarize your arguments. So you are also caught up in the game of paraphrase.

—I agree that paraphrase is sometimes unavoidable. What a second-order discourse about music can do, however, is to present a counterabstract, a counterparaphrase, that contradicts the account that musical research gives of itself by showing how the collective, social nature of language disrupts what the field wants to say, interfering with its control over its own utterances. Indeed, since academic power depends on citation, on abstracts being cited in other scholarly work, one way to challenge and reconfigure power relationships is to put new abstracts into circulation. Beyond this, one can also experiment with styles of discourse that are multilayered, writing in ways that defeat attempts at paraphrase. This will only succeed if the reader becomes a coauthor, not seeking to appropriate a ready-made truth but collaborating in its production, not seeking the security of a single subject position but experimenting with many. I previously invoked the image of a dancer; it will take a dancer’s agility, a dancer’s balance, to leap lightly among these discourses, these different subject positions.

—Readers may still wonder how to reconcile two stages of your argument: the ideology of the abstract, of which we’ve just spoken, and the ideology of the aesthetic, represented by your Bermuda Triangle. It is difficult to know to what extent they coincide, and if they differ, does this signal a productive tension or does it mean that they are simply incompatible?

I’m sorry to keep raising the specter of contradiction, but here it arises because the grounds on which you repudiate the ideology of the abstract would seem to be at least as much aesthetic as they are anything else. Al-



though you have emphasized ethical concerns in that they force people to objectify themselves in the competition for cultural capital, another implication is that you want to combat the regime of paraphrase with a discourse about music that would be artistic in some respects, that would share qualities with the object to which it seeks to be adequate (even if this is only a regulative ideal)—qualities such as uniqueness, resistance to paraphrase, and openness to multiple interpretations. By beginning your book with story, for example, you seem to embrace a strategy of giving imaginative pleasure, of writing in an “aesthetic” mode.

But the reader who rushed to conclude that you are promoting aesthetic values will be surprised by your Bermuda Triangle, which contributes to a currently fashionable trend to “demystify” the aesthetic by historicizing it, by demonstrating, for example, that categories such as “beauty,” “meaning,” “expression,” “autonomy,” and even the concept of art itself are historically conditioned rather than eternal or immutable. Now up to a certain point this historicization can be valuable, challenging us to rethink received ideas, but carried too far some would say it risks reducing art to a manifestation of politics. It seems to me that however flawed or inadequate our concepts of art or beauty or unity may be, and despite any circumstances surrounding their evolution, the reasons we study music at all include its aesthetic value, its capacity to illuminate the world of human feeling and experience. Leo Treitler supports this perspective with his usual eloquence: “We have no possibility of historical knowledge of music, unless we take account of its beauty, its expressiveness, its power to move people, in its time, in the present, and in between.” He concludes that we need not only a “rehistoricization” of music but also a “reaestheticization.”<sup>74</sup>

Where do you stand on these issues? Are you *for* the aesthetic or *against* it? And if you are against it, where does this leave the ideology of the abstract?

—A critique of the aesthetic must resist the static alternatives of acceptance or rejection. Some of the most provocative critical theory today has tried to read the history of aesthetics against itself, as Barbara Claire Freeman does, for example, when she argues that Kant attempted to neutralize some unsettling implications of his own theory of the sublime, defending against its subversive potential, by enclosing it “within a theory of the beautiful.” In seeking “to recover a feminine sublime that traditional theories of the sublime repress,” she is paradoxically faithful to Kant by trying to think through the ambivalent moments in his writing.<sup>75</sup> Thus she does not by any means negate or repudiate the power of art—far from it—or demystify it out of existence. Nor do I. Like her, however, I want to resist a certain idealization of the aesthetic, and my Bermuda Triangle suggests certain linkages through which this idealization operates, certain hidden complicities between the subject of musical research and its objects. Hayden White, for example, suggests one of these links when he argues that the disciplinization of history in the nineteenth century involved “subordinating written history to the categories of the ‘beautiful’ and suppressing those of the ‘sublime.’” Through this process past events acquire the perspicuous quality associated with beautiful objects, confirming the historian’s “faith in the ‘unity’ that makes finite sets of historical particulars comprehensible wholes,” endowed



with meaning, and opposed to the infinite and chaotic spectacle of the sublime.<sup>76</sup> Thus when Treitler argues that we need to counter a “rehistoricization” of music with a “reaestheticization,” White would respond that we must be careful lest this reproduce an old pattern of collusion between historiography and the aesthetics of the beautiful, in which historical events are represented as objects for disinterested contemplation, bounded, self-contained, and self-identical.

—Let’s talk about this desire to be self-identical, which you regard as a coercive model for thinking about disciplinary objects. By placing the human subject—or a form of it, the monologic or self-identical subject—at one vortex of your Bermuda Triangle, while also citing with approval certain critiques of the Cartesian subject, readers might conclude that you endorse the so-called death of the subject that has been trumpeted by some versions of poststructuralism. In her book on jazz improvisation, Ingrid Monson speaks for many when she warns that this sort of thinking can lead to a denial of agency, and she adds that “poststructuralist and postmodern emphasis on representation and the discursive production of subjectivity seems to have had the paradoxical effect of moving academic discourse in a direction of greater ivory-tower isolation while ostensibly engaging society’s most mundane cultural productions.”<sup>77</sup>

Before accusing you of these things, I should mention other factors that complicate this picture. You speak with passion, for example, about resisting the manner in which institutions compel people to objectify themselves, and you write about interrogating the grounds for choice among positions. This would seem to imply a belief in agency, in a self who does the choosing. So how do you reconcile these competing strains in your thought? The issue gains its urgency because the question of agency would seem a key to understanding how your project is to be read. Is it a narrative of liberation, in which the musicological subject gradually frees itself from institutional constraints? Or is there no self to be liberated?

—To trace some historical connections between a certain narrative of human identity and a certain idealization of the aesthetic does not entail rejecting all forms of both. I believe in the subject, but in Lacan’s sense: as the subject of a lack, as something that emerges in a process of splitting, as something divided against itself.

—But by telling me that I am not self-identical, that I am and am not myself, you invoke controversial psychoanalytic theories of unconscious motivations which seem irrelevant to the process of knowledge formation in the humanities. Whatever unconscious intentions individuals may have, knowledge is knowledge.

—By invoking psychoanalysis, I am engaging what Richard Feldstein calls “postpsychoanalysis,” forms of cultural and political critique that have reworked psychoanalytic models, often with considerable critical distance and in combination with other perspectives, to explain social phenomena such as the function of identification and fantasy in political ideologies.<sup>78</sup> In considering musical research as an institutional discourse, I am interested in

understanding institutional desires and collective rather than individual processes of identification.

—Although I appreciate the distinction you're making between individual and collective identifications, this does not validate psychoanalysis as a method for understanding social phenomena. How, for example, can you eliminate the biological determinism that so many people find objectionable in Freud's account of individual psychic life?

—It is precisely here that Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud seems peculiarly apt for explaining the cultural bases of identity; as Žižek points out, Lacan transformed Freud's categories, envisioning developmental stages "not as biologically determined stages in libidinal evolution, but as different modes of the dialectical *subjectivization* of the child's position"<sup>79</sup> in the family network. This insight into the social and collective field through which subjectivity emerges has given Lacan's work an extraordinary influence on recent political philosophy and social theory. Laclau and Mouffe, for example, have adapted Lacan's work not only to counteract essentialist models of identity (whether based on class, race, gender, ethnicity, or whatever) but also to counter models that portray social agents as infinitely mutable, prismatic, and able to transform themselves at will. Since a constitutive split compels the subject to identify with something external, there is no necessary connection between a subject and its identifications, no single and authentic way to interpret one's structural positions in society, so that identity is contingent. At the same time, however, the meaning of a subject position depends on its articulation with other positions, and "every subject position bears the residual traces of past articulations,"<sup>80</sup> so choices are not made in a vacuum.

Musical research is immersed in this world of postmodern plural identities, and I see considerable potential to change the field by acknowledging that any subject who writes about music today is split, divided from itself by conflicting institutional desires. We cannot heal these divisions, since they represent social contradictions rather than mere errors, but we can diagnose their effects and learn to manage them better. In this respect my project is open-ended: it cannot promise the narrative closure of a fully achieved identity. On the other hand, by accepting the permanent incompleteness of identity, it can help us to rethink musicology in ways that will better reflect its position in our contemporary world.

—Let me interrupt here to clarify my differences with you, because I am eager to find common ground even if only to construct a shared space in which our disagreements will be clear to both of us. When you say that "musical research is immersed in this world of postmodern plural identities," I agree with you only insofar as it tries to understand how different social groups experience themselves in their musics. Thus the proliferation of social identities has sparked a corresponding growth in academic studies of new repertoires, performers, and audiences, and we now have sophisticated studies of rock, jazz, heavy metal, rap, salsa, reggae, disco, polka bands, klezmer, bluegrass, gay and lesbian appropriations of opera, and so on. In study-

ing how these musics interact with—both reflect and modify—social identities, some scholars have used psychoanalytic categories to good effect. In *Disruptive Divas: Feminism, Identity, and Popular Music*, for example, Lori Burns and Mélisse Lafrance acknowledge their indebtedness to Judith Butler, whose model of identity formation combines psychoanalysis with a Foucauldian analysis of power relations, and they also cite Lacan himself, although not without reservations.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Carolyn Abbate has invoked Lacan in her studies of opera,<sup>82</sup> while David Schwarz's engagement with psychoanalysis in *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* seems a particularly subtle achievement in this regard.<sup>83</sup> The work of Lawrence Kramer also comes to mind.<sup>84</sup> For these writers, psychoanalysis can help us accumulate knowledge *about* music, about how music might activate desire and identifications for composers, performers, or listeners. But you want to enlist psychoanalysis—or rather postpsychoanalysis—to interrogate the status of knowledge itself, or the relationship of knowledge and desire in academic disciplines, to understand how the constitutive split in the subject might influence the very objects of inquiry. You seem to imply that the original lack of identity that postmodern social life has made apparent is not just something that scholars who engage music might choose to write *about*, but rather something that affects the space from which we write and thus the structure of disciplinarity itself. I look forward to your defense of such notions, but when it comes to investing in them, you may find me a hard sell, a tough customer.

—Since it will take the rest of the book to put these ideas into action, perhaps we can agree to continue this discussion later.

## **Part II**

### *Subject, Text, Context*

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## PRELUDE

As I was composing this book, living in a modest boarding house that seemed to attract an eccentric clientele, things mysteriously began to disappear from my rooms. At first I was reluctant to acknowledge the reality of the situation, especially since there were no signs of forced entry, and the missing items seemed relatively insignificant. Even when a letter vanished from my mantelpiece, I wondered if I had merely misplaced it, owing to the absentmindedness that accompanies my bursts of creative energy. Gradually, however, such incidents began to multiply. One night, as I was whistling Rossini's Overture to *La Gazza Ladra*, I realized that the debris on my desk seemed even more randomly distributed than usual, as if someone had been ransacking my papers, and one of my compositions was missing from the music stand on the piano. Coming home from the movies later that week, I discovered my trash can had been overturned, disgorging the wadded-up remains of my rejected drafts and exposing all my erasures and hesitations.

Deciding to confront the intruder, I pretended to leave for my evening meal at my usual time but returned early, creeping quietly up the back stairs. As I listened outside my rooms, I could hear papers crinkling within. Gently I opened the door without turning on the light. Crouched on my desk was a small furry creature; perhaps it was a squirrel, but it was hard to be certain in the dark. A shaft of light from the hallway fell on its eyes, which seemed to bear a benevolent expression. Startled by my unexpected arrival, it froze momentarily, then suddenly snatched a page from my journal and scurried out the open window.

Rattling noises overhead, like the roll of a distant snare drum, alerted me that it had retreated to the attic. I rushed upstairs and threw on the light. The shy creature was nowhere to be seen, but in a corner behind some boxes I found that it had constructed what appeared to be some kind of nest or bed out of the most motley collection of papers. There were

letters and postcards, musical manuscripts, cartoons and maps, illustrated calendars and pages torn from books, and scraps of paper with ragged edges, in white and yellow, pink and blue. I recognized the cramped scrawl of my neighbor N. and the feathery script of L., the composer. There, too, were my missing letter and music. The creature must have been stealing from everyone in the building for years, braiding the purloined papers into an intricate patchwork.

My first thought was to disentangle my papers from this collage, but then curiosity prompted me to examine the whole. I was amused, then intrigued, by the effect of quilting together such varied materials. Although my editor might have deplored the lack of transitions and the multiplicity of styles, there seemed to be some guiding impulse, some fragile design at work, as if the creature were intent on releasing some collective energy. Gradually, as I groped for connections among all these fragments, an elusive order began to emerge, then recede, then emerge again.

I read long into the night . . .

### 3

## THE FORMATION OF DISCIPLINARY IDENTITIES

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### I

One of the enabling conditions for statements about music involves the formation of individual and group identities. How do research communities, and particular factions within them, achieve their relative cohesiveness as groups? How do individuals come to identify with particular discourses? What properties in a discourse create potential for identifications? These questions converge on the question that Louis Althusser posed in his famous essay on ideological state apparatuses: How does a given social order reproduce itself, how does it reproduce the conditions of production? Althusser's answer, which is at once indispensable and unsatisfactory, is that ideology transforms individuals into subjects through a process of "interpellation," hailing them, Althusser says, much as a police officer might call to someone on the street, saying "Hey, you there!"—so that individuals recognize themselves as subjects of the interpellation, identifying with the social order.<sup>1</sup> Since this model tends to portray people as passive dupes of the system, programed to react in predictable ways, it has been widely criticized. Yet even Althusser's critics regard the issues he raises as an essential starting point, while arguing that we must expand the notion of ideology to include the possibility for resistance, cases where interpellation fails. Paul Smith, for example, suggests that texts contain multiple and conflicting interpellations, opening possibilities for resistance and social change, for taking a critical stance toward ideology.<sup>2</sup>

One place where the identity of research communities emerges is through what I call *narratives of disciplinary legitimation*. Contributions to musical scholarship typically argue for their cultural authority by telling a story about the state of the discipline, citing prior research, persuading us of the need for their intervention on a particular topic, justifying their methodology, refuting competing schools of thought, and so on. Since mu-



sical research is often addressed to a professional audience, these narrative strategies create potential sources for someone to construct an identity as a music historian, ethnomusicologist, theorist, or member of a more specialized subgroup. They interpellate the subject, who can respond with various degrees of identification or distance. In his analysis of historical prose, Hayden White has shown that historians typically cast their work in the same plot forms found in imaginative literature, including romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire.<sup>3</sup> Although White is concerned with how historians emplot their data and does not explicitly consider the sort of legitimating narratives I address here, the tendency to utilize conventional plot forms is not limited to historical accounts. People make sense of their lives through narrative, whether they perpetually follow the same script or periodically revise it. In disciplinary narratives, scholars make sense of their professional lives, emplotting their relationship to their disciplines, which they may experience in terms of tragic dignity, heroic struggle, ironic ambivalence, and so on.

Before such legitimating narratives can be examined in detail, however, both the concept of the subject and the category of ideology must be clarified. As Smith observes, Western thought has long relied on the notion of the autonomous, rational individual who controls his or her own actions, so that the individual is conceived in opposition to society.<sup>4</sup> To speak of the *subject*, by contrast, recognizes the social formation of the individual. In contrast to traditional societies, in which social roles are more or less fixed at birth, in modern societies identity is not given in advance but is constructed—negotiated among various historically and socially available options. In the postindustrial service economy, in which workers often lack the security of a lifetime job and may change careers frequently, reinventing themselves, we become all the more aware of the precariousness of identity. Thus the subject is not the unfolding of an essential nature but the occupant of various discursive positions, locations in social space. In disentangling the notion of the subject from that of the individual, *subject position* becomes a valuable concept for critical theory, as Dominick LaCapra explains: “Despite its jargonistic sound, subject-position is a crucial notion that conjoins social and psychoanalytic concerns, and it critically mediates between an essentializing idea of identity and an ill-defined, ideologically individualistic and often aestheticized notion of subjectivity.”<sup>5</sup> Although the notion of subject position involves psychoanalysis, my interest is in what Richard Feldstein calls “post-psychoanalysis,” which is a kind of cultural criticism that utilizes psychoanalytic models.<sup>6</sup> Thus I am not concerned here with individual pathologies but with how social and institutional discourses allow individuals to occupy and contest social space.

“Ideology” is a tricky term. In his valuable introduction to the topic, Terry Eagleton lists no less than sixteen definitions of the term currently in use, some of them contradictory.<sup>7</sup> Before this concept can be useful, therefore, its scope must be clarified, particularly because of the tendency, noted

by Ernesto Laclau, to use ideological analysis in an essentializing way. Laclau singles out two recurrent themes in the critique of ideology that are particularly problematic: (1) ideology has often been conceived as a distinct level of the social totality; (2) ideology has often been represented as false consciousness, as misrecognizing the true state of things.<sup>8</sup> As he demonstrates, however, ideology can only be a level of the social if we know the whole. But if we abandon the essentialist idea of society “as the founding instance of its partial processes,” it does not exist as a whole that could ever be specified.<sup>9</sup> The notion of false consciousness, meanwhile, implies the possibility of true consciousness and the existence of an outside perspective from which we can judge consciousness. To escape these essentialist pitfalls, Laclau recommends inverting these traditional views, so that ideology is *not* considered a separate level of the social, and ideological misrecognition involves denying the fragmentary nature of the social.

The ideological would not consist of the misrecognition of a positive essence, but exactly the opposite: it would consist of the non-recognition of the precarious character of any positivity, of the impossibility of any ultimate suture. The ideological would consist of those discursive forms through which a society tries to institute itself as such on the basis of closure, of the fixation of meaning, of the non-recognition of the infinite play of differences. The ideological would be the will to “totality” of any totalizing discourse. And insofar as the social is impossible without some fixation of meaning, without the discourse of closure, the ideological must be seen as constitutive of the social. The social only exists as the vain attempt to institute that impossible object: society.<sup>10</sup>

My starting point for understanding the subject is Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, which has been enormously influential, even among feminists who have appropriated significant aspects of his work while criticizing others. By regarding the subject as fundamentally split, divided against itself, Lacan provides a compelling paradigm for understanding the formation of identity in musical research, which occupies, as I shall argue below, contradictory cultural locations. During the so-called mirror stage, which Lacan associates with the installation of the Imaginary order, the infant is captivated by its own image, whether in a mirror or simply as reflected in the gestures of others; yet this recognition is simultaneously a misrecognition, because the infant’s “jubilant” reaction comes from attributing a wholeness and unity to this image that its own uncoordinated body lacks.<sup>11</sup> In structuring its identity through an idealized and external image, the subject misrecognizes the conditions of its own identity, so that “identity and alienation are . . . strictly correlative.”<sup>12</sup> The mirror stage becomes a model for later acts of identification involving an imaginary counterpart that Lacan calls “the little other” (“the other who is not an other”), an other who resembles me and whom I may regard either as a rival who inspires jealousy or as an ideal to emulate. Later, when the subject enters the Symbolic

through the introduction of the signifier, there is another alienation, since we are forced to make ourselves understood in a language we did not invent. As Bruce Fink observes, proper names exemplify the alienating nature of language: nothing intrinsically connects us to our names, yet they designate our innermost being.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, even before birth the subject's place in the Symbolic was prepared, as Colette Soler remarks: "the Other as the locus of language—the Other who speaks, precedes the subject and speaks about the subject before its birth."<sup>14</sup> When we confront the Other as desire, rather than as language, during what Lacan calls "separation," a further split occurs. By structuring our desire through the Other, desiring what the Other desires and as an Other, we are alienated from our own desire.

In musical research, the subject who writes is split by its very attempt to produce a discourse about music. Not only does music resist language, but the professional languages we use to describe it are largely in place when we come on the scene; we are always using another's language, language that we can modify only to a degree. The ethnomusicologist, for example, must not only frequently learn the language of the culture under study—as Steven Feld did, for example, when he lived with the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea—but also the terminology and conceptual distinctions found in the canonical texts of ethnomusicology, which derive, to a large extent, from the neighboring discipline of ethnography. Or in the field of music theory, anyone who studies Heinrich Schenker's analytical method is plunged into an alien language with strange words like *Ursatz*, *Urlinie*, *Kopftön*, *Übergreifen*, and so on, along with novel graphic symbols for representing these concepts. One is never more alienated from one's language than one is when these terms become second nature, when one loses any outside perspective on them so that they seem self-evident.

Musical research today is also split between at least two institutional forces and locations, giving it divided sources of cultural authority and power. It is perched between two ideological state apparatuses: art and education, which Althusser considered two of the most important means through which societies reproduce their values. We are split between the world of music as an art, craft, or practical activity and the world of the high university as a site of knowledge production. These institutions are often in conflict, and there are conflicts within them as well. In writing about music within the academy, we face demands for both musical and academic legitimacy; we are asked to keep faith with musical sound, with the pleasures of musical practice, while also promoting intellectual values, producing knowledge.

The demand for academic legitimation is a particularly sore point, because music study came late to the academy. As Manfred Bukofzer puts it, music arrived through the back door, through the gradual establishment of glee clubs, university musical societies, and so on.<sup>15</sup> Recognition as a serious intellectual discipline was slow in coming. Bruno Nettl relates an apocryphal anecdote in which a nineteenth-century president of Harvard al-

legedly dismissed the academic aspirations of music: "There's no such thing as musicology, one might as well speak of grandmotherology!"<sup>16</sup> Even today, I sometimes meet people who can converse intelligently about literary theory, art history, and film studies yet express surprise that the academic study of music even *exists*: "Isn't music just something you *do*? You play it, compose it, listen to it? Why, then, would anyone want to talk about it?" The pressure to justify one's presence in the university can be a source of anxiety, while provoking imaginary rivalries and identifications. One might, for example, look to other disciplines as role models and sources of intellectual prestige, while idealizing them, attributing to them a wholeness and authority that they may not possess for their own practitioners, who may consider them in transition or disarray. On the other hand, one might enter into imaginary rivalries with other factions within musical research, trying to delegitimize their claims to academic rigor, the better to establish one's own. Some may distance themselves from practical musicianship to obtain academic legitimacy. A typical strategy of delegitimation might run as follows: "Your group deals only with musical *skills*; we deal with *ideas*!" Another apocryphal anecdote comes to mind here; when asked if students at Princeton should receive academic credit for lessons in musical performance, Milton Babbitt allegedly answered: "Does the English department give credit for typing?"

At the same time, however, musical research faces an opposite pressure, for musicians themselves often question the value of musical scholarship, seeing it as irrelevant to the real work of practical music-making. In conservatories and schools of music, for example, students often regard their academic requirements as an imposition, an infringement on their practice time; some may even fear that intellectualizing music will damage their spontaneous enjoyment of it. One must counter this by arguing that musical research is more than academic, that it is also centrally connected to musical practice. In teaching music history, for example, historians must in effect argue for a sort of delayed gratification—that a detour through music history will make students better musicians because they'll know what they're playing. (A skeptic might wonder whether knowing the history and social context of football will enhance our pleasure in the sport.) Musical research is caught, therefore, between demands for academic rigor and musical relevance, between the immediacy of musical pleasures and the mediated knowledge of the university. These conflicting demands can create a double bind, because in satisfying one demand we may move further away from the other. One might envision the disciplinary superego as a two-headed creature barking contradictory commands: "Be thou academic! Be thou musical! Accumulate knowledge, pile it up! Shut up and listen!"

This sort of conflict, of course, is hardly unique to music. In his study of the development of modern identity, Charles Taylor suggests that the "moral sources of the self" may derive from opposing traditions. The Enlightenment ideal of achieving moral autonomy through instrumental

reason may conflict with the Romantic ideal that he calls the “aesthetic-expressive self.”<sup>17</sup> Although both traditions provide models for the self that are still viable today, it may be hard fully to reconcile them; they may exist in a state of permanent tension. From the perspective of the Romantic self, the Enlightenment self may seem coldly rational and detached, while from the reverse perspective the Romantic ideal may seem overly subjective. Since musical research is one of the places where this social antagonism is played out, more is at stake in statements about music than meets the eye.

In Lacanian theory, the subject is an answer to a question; to create an identity is to fill a gap, or hole, by answering the question: “What does the big Other [the symbolic institution] want from me?”<sup>18</sup> We are always trying to get a read on the Other, to find out what it wants. In musical research, any number of signifiers could fill the place of the Other in this question. (What does the composer want from me? What does my discipline want from me? What does the university want from me?) Since “the big Other does not exist,” however—does not exist as a closed, consistent order—identity is always incomplete; the question can never be answered definitively. This is where narrative comes in: as Hans Kellner reminds us, “narrative exists to make continuous what is discontinuous.”<sup>19</sup> The holes in our identities that result from the constructed nature of our disciplinary objects, or from the precariously divided institutional location of musical research, can be smoothed through narratives of disciplinary legitimation. Through their narrative closure, these stories attempt to satisfy the conflicting demands for pleasure and knowledge, providing pleasurable knowledge, or a knowledge of pleasure.

In speaking of pleasure and knowledge, I am deliberately invoking the later Foucault, who uses the axis pleasure/power/knowledge in his history of sexuality.<sup>20</sup> Attempts to unify pleasure and knowledge inevitably involve power. Of course, the power of the scholar is not that of the despot. Often the only power sought may be the power of belonging to an “in group,” or the power of identifying norms, or of submitting to them. Power circulates in narratives of disciplinary legitimation, by telling stories that unify pleasure and knowledge, promising a stable identity.

In this chapter I shall examine a series of these legitimating narratives, concentrating on six authors whose work seems to provide imaginative solutions to the problems of disciplinary identity: Lawrence Kramer, Kay Kaufman Shelemay, Manuel Peña, Nicholas Cook, Joseph Kerman, and Kofi Agawu. I admire all six; my critique is not directed at them as individuals but at the cultural dilemmas to which they respond. If the musicological subject is split, then its discourse is also divided; the narrative level may contradict the explicit assertions in the text. By exploding the narrative closure of these texts, we can open discourse to the strategic exclusions that make closure possible. My own discourse is also split; my arguments are also narratives, so I do not exempt myself from this critique. The danger, however,

lies in disavowing the fictional, constructed character of one's arguments—in denying one's own rhetorical desire to persuade. We need to acknowledge and explore how we emplot our arguments and how, in the process, we construct a self. In their study of the role of rhetoric in the formation of scientific facts, Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar consider the status of their own account. Like them, the only claim I make for my interpretation is that it is "more plausible than any available alternative."<sup>21</sup>

## II

In *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, Lawrence Kramer proposes an ambitious agenda for what he calls "postmodern musicology."<sup>22</sup> As he illustrates this new direction through a series of case studies, he also constructs a disciplinary identity for this new breed of musicologists. Kramer begins in a state of mourning; something has been lost: he deplores "the lack, or rather the loss, of a viable public discourse about classical music" (p. 4). The goal of postmodern musicology is to fill this gap by creating a new public discourse, one that will restore meaning to music: "the object sought is meaning: concrete, complex, and historically situated" (p. 2). Kramer interpellates us, then, as subjects who lack—in Lacanian terms, as hysterical subjects—and promises to overcome that lack by recovering what we have lost, a discourse on musical meaning.

This search for a lost object launches us on a quest romance. As M. H. Abrams remarks, romance narratives often have a tripartite form, which he describes as "unity, unity lost, and unity-to-be-regained."<sup>23</sup> In Kramer's version of this archetypal plot, the unity sought is that between "musical knowledge" and "musical response," or between knowledge and pleasure, intellect and emotion. Scholarship today is alienated from music: "Involvement with what is communicative, expressive, or sensuous in the music occupies the position of controlled deviance. . . . The result is a yawning gap between musical knowledge and musical response that nothing seems able to bridge" (pp. 67–68). Abrams points out that the return to origins is seldom a mere duplication but instead recaptures the past at a higher level, since it is experienced with enhanced self-consciousness, fusing "the circular pattern with the idea of linear progress."<sup>24</sup> Kramer follows this pattern by insisting that the new musicology, or its postmodern variant, will be more than a literal return to the past.

In trying to reverse this development, the so-called new musicology, like most intellectual developments, is in part a revival. But it is not just a reproduction, like a new piece of period furniture. Its purpose is to recapture, not the content of an earlier discourse, but the role of that discourse in society and culture. (p. 5)

The romance plot archetype tends to slight complex character development in favor of stark oppositions between good and evil, light and darkness. The roles of hero and antagonist tend to be very strongly contrasted, with all the positive values on the side of the hero.<sup>25</sup> That is precisely what happens here: Kramer casts postmodern musicology as the hero and associates it with a string of virtues, including warmth, feeling, humanity, and meaning. The narrative logic of romance seems to require an “other” against which these virtues can be defined; the hero needs an antagonist. Kramer opposes the new paradigm, therefore, to something he calls “modernist musicology,” which he links to a series of negative qualities: it is cold, inhuman, positivistic, formalist, mechanical, and impersonally rational. It drives a wedge between intellect and emotion: “Modernist musicology maintains that gap by constructing the material and expressive force of music as the other of musical form” (p. 64). The battle between these two discourses has been going on for a long time. In the nineteenth century, “esoteric conceptions of music” competed with “semantic conceptions”; the first type was based on music’s “apparent transcendence of signification,” while the second “imbued music with poetic, narrative, or philosophical meaning” (p. 4). The semantic model fused intellect and emotion; the esoteric model divided them. During the twentieth century, Kramer believes there was “a decisive victory for the esoteric side, at least as far as Western music is concerned” (p. 5). To recover musical meaning, Kramer stages a succession of encounters between postmodern musicology and its rival; by defeating a series of writers whom he associates with modernist musicology, including Charles Rosen, Charles Seeger, Carl Dahlhaus, Heinrich Schenker, and others, he secures a triumph of postmodern musicology.

Consider, for example, his agon with Charles Rosen concerning Mozart’s *Divertimento* for String Trio, K. 563. For Kramer, Rosen’s commentary on this piece typifies the modernist tendency to idealize music and deprive it of human relevance. Kramer vehemently rejects Rosen’s argument that the piece transforms the public realm of the *divertimento* into the private realm of chamber music by invoking the *divertimento* form with two slow movements and two minuets, “transfiguring the ‘popular’ element without losing sight of its provenance.” Instead, Kramer is struck by the physicality of the piece, by the way its demands on the players create a sense of “not-listening to a string quartet,” which he considers a “moment of Derridean *différance*” (p. 27).

But what if the music were heard, not as the site where its contexts vanish, but precisely as the site where they appear? Not long ago I attended a performance of K. 563. Its texture, which as Rosen suggests includes a great deal of complex three-voice writing, struck me not merely as transparent but as painfully transparent, transparent to excess. The instrumental voices seemed to be entering and disengaging with something like physical friction—or so I thought until I realized that this figurative idea



was close to being literal. The friction was physical, or more exactly, corporeal. By emphasizing both the linearity of each instrumental voice and the textural differentiation among the voices, and by doing so in the spare, exposed medium of the string trio, Mozart was foregrounding the effort to produce music in performance. The effort was specifically bodily, conveyed by the bodies of the performers to and through the bodies of their instruments, so that the music became a tangible projection or articulation of bodily energy. (pp. 26–27)

Kramer might have treated his analysis as something that complements Rosen's or simply as an alternative hearing, adding another layer to the context that Rosen discusses. But Kramer's tendency to see their views as diametrically opposed, his desire to refute and discredit Rosen, suggests the agonistic impulse to defeat the opponent.

By soliciting our identification with the hero in a quest romance and promising to fill the gap in our identities by restoring musical meaning, Kramer provides a powerful legitimating discourse for postmodern musicology. This discourse seeks academic legitimacy by invoking sophisticated critical models from outside music, while also seeking musical legitimacy by talking about musical meaning. Indeed, his claim to integrate "musical knowledge" and "musical response" could be interpreted as satisfying the conflicting demands of the cultural institutions within which musical research operates.

Other interpellations operate here as well. Because of its tendency toward binary oppositions, the romance plot can produce strongly divided responses. In Lacanian terms, Kramer's narrative can be read as a mirror-stage rivalry, in which the other who resembles me can trigger aggressivity by threatening to deprive me of an identity. Kramer's narrative of legitimation depends on delegitimation: his denigration of modernist musicology is essential to his identity as a postmodern musicologist. Only by defeating a rival—and defeating it again and again in a series of struggles—can he secure his disciplinary identity. The reader who refuses the text's interpellation might wonder: Was the separation between "semantic" and "esoteric" conceptions of music, for example, as absolute as Kramer maintains? Is the difference between Kramer and his antagonists really so extreme? Does the need to define oneself against a rival produce an uncontrollable rhetorical excess, in which the opponent must be accused of bad faith? Must the reign of warmth, humanity, and meaning be established through rhetorical violence?

There is also a conflict between Kramer's fictional strategy and his avowed claim of creating a postmodern musicology, since the dichotomies that drive the romance plot contradict the tendency in postmodern thought to deconstruct binary oppositions—a tendency of which Kramer is well aware. To be sure, postmodernism exists in many competing versions, yet it is seldom theorized as a simple negation of modernism that could play the



heroic role of overcoming it. In contrast to the utopian projects that characterize many forms of modernism, postmodernism involves a complex imbrication of past and present and thus a complex relationship to modernism. Indeed, the *agon* associated with a romance narrative might be better suited to the modernist desire to overcome the past, especially since the modern break with the recent past often conceals a disavowed romanticism, involving a nostalgic desire for a return to an idealized, remote past. T. S. Eliot's myth of a "dissociation of sensibility," for instance, exemplifies this aspect of modernism; according to Eliot, intellect and emotion once existed in a state of harmonious complementarity, but since the mid-seventeenth century they have parted ways. As Christopher Norris points out, however, Eliot defines the dissociated sensibility by contrast to a prior "organic," unified sensibility conceived in Hegelian terms, so that Eliot's well-known hostility to romanticism "goes along with a covert adherence to its whole working system of evaluative terms and categories."<sup>26</sup> The gap between "musical knowledge" and "musical response" is Kramer's version of a dissociated sensibility, suggesting a covert romanticism at work within his postmodern project. Indeed, the terms through which Kramer characterizes postmodern musicology and its modernist rival recall the sort of oppositions through which the romantics contrasted organic and mechanical models. Organic forms, like postmodern musicology, are warm, living, human, and meaningful, while mechanical forms, like modernist musicology, are frigid, dead, inhuman, meaningless, and so on. Kramer's eloquence depends to no small extent on his ability to marshal this organicist rhetoric. A central irony in Kramer's work, as in that of many recent critiques of musical organicism, is that by accusing music theorists of reducing music to dead formulas, they unconsciously but consistently reproduce the language of organicism.

With regard to "Mozart's staging of the body" (p. 28) in K. 563, Kramer presents his analysis as the recovery of an authentic meaning, as the restoration of a social context that Rosen idealizes and represses, while Kramer reunites us with the forgotten human content. This implies that the body was always lurking in this piece like an elephant in the living room and Kramer was the first to step forward and point out the hypocrisy of those who had studiously been ignoring it. But Kramer ignores the historical conditions of his own understanding. In Mozart's day, music was always produced by bodies. The relatively recent phenomenon of recorded music, which by now is the normative listening experience for most people, offers not only the possibility of idealizing music by denying its corporeal origins but also the opposite possibility of recognizing the physical and material aspects of music through this very absence. I suspect we have all had stunned moments of comparing live performances to the packaged, glossy versions available on records and noticing that musicians sweat, grunt, breathe, and sigh. Mozart and his audiences would no more remark on this than they would remark that the musicians were wearing powdered wigs. Kramer's

reading of the piece is provocative, even brilliant, but it represents a new and imaginative hearing of the piece; it is a product of our cultural distance from Mozart's time, a product of our estrangement rather than a recovery of meaning. Another enabling condition for Kramer's response is the recent academic interest in the body, which has been a subject of symposia, books, articles, and seminars in recent decades. Talking about the body can be a source of cultural capital in today's university. This is not to accuse Kramer of jumping on an academic bandwagon. But in the managed university, with its demands for scholarly currency, we are all under pressure to keep up with trends; we all have our fingers held to the wind. This is the ideological moment in Kramer, the moment when he misrecognizes the conditions of his own identity and his own knowledge.

### III

In *Let Jasmine Rain Down: Song and Remembrance among Syrian Jews*, Kay Kaufman Shelemay "seeks to understand the Syrian Jewish self as expressed in music" (p. 69).<sup>27</sup> In this study of the *pizmonim*, paraliturgical hymns with Hebrew texts set to preexisting melodies, Shelemay presents herself as a conciliator. By contrast to Kramer, she neither denigrates other methods nor defines herself against them. Instead, she tries to reconcile conflicting directions in her field. This desire for unity becomes apparent, for example, in her attempt to incorporate both musical and cultural analyses; ethnomusicology has been "torn between musicological and anthropological poles" (p. 19), but she finds both perspectives valuable and promises to unite them, in part by including transcriptions of *pizmonim* in the prelude to each chapter. She also speaks of "spanning the divide that has long separated cognitive from cultural studies" (p. 12). By studying the *pizmonim* as a source of cultural memory, she hopes to unite cognitive theories of memory with a cultural approach. From the standpoint of emplotment, this is comedy, the genre that reconciles contraries. In a comic plot, the roles of hero and heroine are more evenly balanced than they typically are in other genres; the marriage that often culminates the comic plot can be read as a reconciliation of social conflicts. If Kramer achieves a sense of self-identity by casting out the opposite, distancing himself from "modernist" musicology, Shelemay achieves it through inclusiveness, by incorporating opposites. Although her strategy is much less likely to polarize the audience, it is not without its own ideological moment, as we shall see.

This notion of a harmonious reconciliation of opposites extends to her portrayal of Syrian Jewish identity. She observes, for example, that the *pizmonim*, which are often set to melodies borrowed from Middle Eastern Arab sources, constitute "a Judeo-Arab musical discourse" (p. 3) that can bridge the divisions between cultures, even in light of the present-day Arab-Israeli conflict, which "has tended to mask centuries of creative interaction . . .

between peoples of Islamic and Jewish heritage in the Levant” (p. 73). With the diaspora of Syrian Jews, which has scattered them as far as Brooklyn and Mexico City, many other cultural voices now coexist peacefully in the songs, which now incorporate tunes from sources as diverse as Beethoven and Broadway, “enabling a Jewish people to perpetuate a tradition shaped by Arab values as they integrated into modern American life” (p. 115). Although she does note tensions between Jews of Ashkenazic lineage and those from Syria, she portrays the Ḥalabi community as harmonious and internally unified. Music is an important source of this unity; the songs are “an important agent of continuity that has undergone extraordinary dislocation” (p. 115). If we examine the system of metaphors in her text, images of connection abound. She describes the system of scales on which the melodies are based—the *maqām* principle—as “a connective tissue linking all forms of expression within Syrian Jewish religious and social life” (p. 127). The melodies belonging to the same *maqām* are described as “families,” so that the *pizmonim* are capable of connecting not only words and music but also people and melodies: “Uniting both text and tune, however, is the notion of family: real families named in texts, musical ‘families’ evoked in melody” (p. 50). Music is repeatedly described as capable of uniting opposites: “Music enables this pivot between present and past, and between the mundane and the sacred” (p. 171); “individual and collective memories converge . . . during *pizmon* performance” (p. 209). In Shelemay’s account, then, the Syrian Jewish musical tradition has an extraordinary power to heal divisions, uniting Arab and Jew, sacred and secular, words and music, individual and collective, past and present.

Although this generous vision of reconciliation exerts a strong suasive appeal, and provides an alluring model for a disciplinary identity as an ethnomusicologist, it raises the question of whether something might resist this tendency to merge into a conflict-free unity, of whether unity is achieved at the expense of ignoring dissenting voices. This is especially true today, when cultures are increasingly brought into contact. As Slavoj Žižek points out, the Other is also internally divided; members of other cultures can assume a critical distance toward their own customs just as we can.<sup>28</sup> In the case of the Syrian Jewish communities in Brooklyn and Mexico City, for example, the interpenetration of cultures may not result in a seamless unity.

One place that brings this question to the fore involves the role of women in Ḥalabi society. In this patriarchal tradition, women clearly play a much less active role than men in musical composition and performance. In chapter 7, we will see how a similar problem among the Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn causes Ellen Koskoff to assume a variety of voices, speaking first from the standpoint of a descriptive ethnographer, providing a neutral account of the culture under study, then assuming the openly political stance of an analytic ethnographer, exposing social injustice, and then contrasting these outside perspectives with the insider perspectives of her informants.<sup>29</sup> Unlike Koskoff, however, Shelemay’s commitment to an image of comic recon-

ciliation apparently makes her reluctant to represent any conflicts within her own identity, or in that of her subjects. Instead, she narrates the facts in a neutral tone: "Evidently, no Ḥalabi women in memory played musical instruments" (p. 129). The question of why they never played instruments, or how they might have felt about this, is never asked. Within a culture that is exposed to outside influences and is no longer homogeneous or monolithic, even a descriptive ethnographer might ask such questions. Or again: "To date, no women have been active as pizmon composers" (p. 189).

Her desire to bridge social conflicts seems to lead her to report everything that might charitably be construed as a sign of increasing participation for women:

While women are not active as composers or performers, many are quite familiar with pizmonim, especially those associated with or dedicated to members of their families. . . . Thus, while women may be neither seen nor heard in the context of pizmon performance, they can transmit valuable information. (pp. 3–4)

On a rare occasion when a woman is mentioned in the text of a song, it provokes a lengthy commentary: "Given the paucity of references to women in the songs, and the fact that women do not generally read or sing the Hebrew pizmon texts, the placement of a woman's name in a manner that calls into play oral comprehension is doubly interesting" (p. 197). The possibility that conflicts might exist, that the community might be internally divided over the issue of women in the performance and composition of pizmonim, is not mentioned.

The existence of submerged tensions, however, briefly surfaces when Shelemay relates a remarkable incident. During a social occasion when pizmonim were being performed, she encountered two of the granddaughters of Moses Tawil (an important musician and one of her key informants) sitting in the women's room. When she asks them why they aren't outside, enjoying the music, their reply contrasts sharply with the celebratory tone of the book: "No. We're bored. This isn't our music" (p. 94). Shelemay reports this without comment. Yet in the context of the conciliatory power attributed to the pizmonim, the granddaughters' attitude is incongruous. The reader may be left wondering whether "the Syrian Jewish self as expressed in music" includes these two girls, given their testimony that "this isn't our music." The question of why they don't identify with it, and the possible tensions in the community that this might indicate, is not asked.

Thus we have conflicting interpellations: we are asked to identify with Ḥalabi music, with its promise of harmonious reconciliation, yet other voices in the text, muted though they may be, strike discordant notes. From a Lacanian perspective, one might compare Shelemay's stance to Kramer's. Kramer is caught in an imaginary rivalry with modernist musicology. The Imaginary is the realm of both identification and rivalry; the other who re-

sembles me can be both a rival, inspiring competition and aggressivity, or someone with whom I identify and emulate, as providing reassuring images of wholeness and completeness. Shelemay identifies with her Ḥalabi informants as they wish to be seen: as projecting an idealized image of community without conflict.

## IV

In *The Mexican American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict*, Manuel Peña writes from a unique perspective: he is not only a scholar of this music, and a Mexican American, but he is also a performer with a wide range of experience in the *orquesta* tradition.<sup>30</sup> The problem of identity, therefore, and of identifying with or maintaining a distance from the subjects of one's study, is a particularly interesting one here. In discussing Shelemay, I suggested that she might have identified too strongly with her Ḥalabi informants as they wished to be seen, and with idealized images of their culture in which conflicts are overcome. Given Peña's even closer relationship to the culture he studies, one might expect a similar problem. But this does not occur. He identifies with his Mexican American subjects to be sure, but as *split subjects*, as agents who occupy conflicting social locations and whose own self-identification is divided and contradictory.

He interprets Mexican American identity through an explicitly Marxist paradigm that he calls "the dialectic of conflict." Within the Mexican American generation, for example, which reached its peak around 1930–60, Peña sees "a three-sided struggle" involving conflicts not only between Anglos and Mexicans but also between middle-class and working-class Mexican Americans (p. 94). The later Chicano generation faced a contradiction between its romantic-nationalist agenda and its political aspirations (p. 203). To the extent that their political demands for equality succeeded, their economic integration into mainstream American society negated their desire for a separate cultural identity.

Within the music, this dialectic is enacted on a symbolic level in the contrast between two ensembles, the conjunto and the orquesta, and their contrasting musical styles, *música ranchera* and *música jaitona* (p. 123).<sup>31</sup> The conjunto is associated with a working-class aesthetic, the orquesta with a middle-class aesthetic, so that the working-class resistance to Anglo culture and the middle-class drive for upward mobility and assimilation are played out in the conflict of musical styles. Here we see a proposed solution to the problem of cultural differences that is quite different from the one offered by Shelemay, who favored a model of cultural reconciliation. This is not to deny that Peña does not also envision potential sources of resolution. But any synthesis in the dialectic of conflict is fragile and short-lived. He portrays the later fusion of the ranchero and jaitón styles in the orquesta of the

1970s as a synthesis and a symbolic resolution of social contradictions: "The Chicano Generation succeeded where the Mexican American Generation had failed in forging at least a surface synthesis of the multiple contradictions attending life on the border between two antagonistic cultures" (p. 221). But he is painfully aware that the resolution is only symbolic, so that "such a synthesis must perforce be temporary" (p. 221).

The climax of the book is a reading, heavily influenced by Fredric Jameson, that interprets a weekend dance in the Mexican American community in terms of its repressed political content. The dance in question, at Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8900 in Fresno, California, took place on July 16, 1977; Peña himself participated as a performer with the group *Beto García y sus GGs*. The middle-class patrons at these events tended to identify with American ideals of assimilation and upward mobility. Peña interprets the dance, however, as "subversive activity" (p. 290) in which the avowed beliefs of the participants conflict with their actual behavior, becoming "a negation of the dominant culture that these conservative Mexican Americans otherwise endorsed publicly" (p. 287). In the ritualized progress of the dance through a series of phases, the evening reaches a point of antistructure that affirms *communitas*, the ritual merging of the people into a collective subject in which they affirm their ethnic identity (p. 294). Music plays a crucial role in this process.

Hayden White has observed that Marxist thought emplots history in a dual fashion, as locally tragic but ultimately comic, since the coming revolution will produce a utopian liberation of human potential.<sup>32</sup> Despite moments of optimism, however, Peña tends toward the tragic side of Marxism, since the concrete struggles he dwells on loom much larger than any hope he sustains for the future. Northrop Frye describes the tragic hero as "caught between two laws" (for example, between human and divine law).<sup>33</sup> Peña's identity is tragically divided between the "law" of ethnic solidarity and the "law" of assimilation, so that any gain in one area would seem to entail a loss in the other.

Although Peña interpellates us as divided subjects by asking us to identify with Mexican Americans, other sources of interpellation are also at work here that might offer the security of a less conflicted identity. His passionate, politically engaged stance, for example, might offer a model for renewing the idea of scholarship as a vocation. In chapter 1 I cited John Guillory's argument that the rise of the professional-managerial class has contributed to a change from seeing scholarship as a calling to seeing it as a profession. By identifying with a historically oppressed minority, scholars might view themselves as working for genuine social change and thus contributing to society in a more than academic-professional way. In addition, Peña's experience as a musician, amply demonstrated through his extensive transcriptions of the orchestra literature in full score, can fulfill the demand for musical relevance that, I have argued, is a source of anxiety for musical research.

Nicholas Cook's monograph *Beethoven: Symphony No. 9*, published in the *Cambridge Music Handbooks* series, belongs to a venerable genre that might be called the "masterpiece guide" or the "masterpiece handbook."<sup>34</sup> By bridging the gap between professional musical scholarship and a general audience, this genre serves an educational function; the Beethoven symphonies, both individually and collectively, have been a fixture in this literature. The publisher's blurb gives a good idea of the expectations one might bring to such a book:

Cambridge Music Handbooks provide accessible introductions to major musical works, written by the most informed commentators in the field.

With the concert-goer, performer and student in mind, the books present essential information on the historical and musical context, the composition, and the performance and reception history of each work, or group of works, as well as critical discussion of the music. (p. ii)

Cook's contribution, however, does not by any means wholly conform to these traditional expectations. In working within this genre today, Cook faces a problem: How can one write a masterpiece guide in an age that is skeptical about the very concept of the masterpiece? After all, the masterpiece represents a sort of gold standard of artistic value, from which we expect universal human meaning rather than mere technical complexity. The Ninth has long served as a touchstone here, with its redemptive message of the Brotherhood of Man. By celebrating the Ninth as a repository of timeless human values, the traditional masterpiece guide carved out a subject position for the reader to identify with Beethoven as a cultural hero. After the decline of master narratives, however, and the breakdown of a cultural consensus that supported a particular canon, what were known as universal human values may no longer seem either universal or humane. It is difficult to sustain faith in the heroic and redemptive image of art, at least without reservations. How can one reconcile the inherent conservatism of the masterpiece guide, then, with the new cultural pressures that problematize this genre?

Cook's solution to this dilemma is to rewrite the masterpiece guide from an ironic perspective, emplotting it in the mode of satire. Satire (from *satura*, meaning "medley" or "stew"), is often a mixed genre that reverses or parodies other genres. Since the satiric tradition often targets intellectual pretensions, deflating the Procrustean schemes of ivory-tower dreamers, it is well suited to Cook's strategy of focusing largely on the reception history of the Ninth, which he represents as a compendium of errors. Cook's deviation from the heroic agenda of the typical masterpiece guide can be seen in the title of his first chapter, "Sketches and Myths." Instead of presenting a



heroic narrative of the evolution of the symphony, he shows how such narratives have been marred by dubious myths, so that the very interpretation of the sketches, and particularly the idea of the genesis of the piece from two symphonies, one purely instrumental and the other including voices, derives from the imposition of ideology onto the facts. As Northrop Frye points out, the stock satiric characters include the *alazon*, the impostor who is often self-deceived, and the *eiron*, a self-deprecating figure who often acts as a foil to the *alazon*.<sup>35</sup> Cook takes the role of *eiron*, casting a shifting variety of musicians, writers, and even national traditions in the *alazon* role.

Cook's basic strategy can be seen, for example, when he juxtaposes Romain Rolland's account of the events surrounding the premiere of the Ninth with Anton Schindler's more prosaic version:

Nothing could more tellingly illustrate the myth-making process than the contrast between Rolland's Beethoven, who faints with emotion as the audience cheers wildly, and Schindler's Beethoven—surely on this occasion the real Beethoven—who collapses when he sees how little money the concert has brought in. (p. 25)

The irony mounts as Cook describes the drastically different traditions in which Rolland's Beethoven book has played a role; it has been used to sanction interpretations as different as the Chinese communist myth of Beethoven as the champion of the working class and the bourgeois Japanese custom of celebrating the New Year with performances of the Ninth involving massive forces. Cook's eye for incongruous details reinforces his image of wry detachment: "It is entirely in the spirit of the Japanese reception . . . that the Ninth is available as a karaoke disc; there is even a comic book telling the story of the first performance of the symphony in Japan" (p. 98). In assuming this stance as *eiron*, Cook interpellates us as ironic subjects, soliciting our identification with the *eiron* role.

His ironic reversals continue with his treatment of Heinrich Schenker. In his monograph on the Ninth, Schenker accused Wagner of grossly tampering with the orchestration and thus violating Beethoven's intentions, but Cook points out unexpected similarities between Wagner and Schenker, placing "Schenker firmly in the Wagnerian tradition of performance" (p. 60). Even though Schenker is reluctant to change the notes, he will do so "when he sees no other choice. . . . Like Wagner, Schenker is telling us what Beethoven *really* intended. The principle is the same" (p. 60). Schenker's attempt to rescue the choral finale for absolute music is portrayed as mere sophistry, "a real lawyer's argument" (p. 86) that displays "a looking-glass logic" (p. 89). Schenker becomes an *alazon*, duped by his own rigid commitment to a dubious ideology. The contrast between Cook's pragmatism and the dogmatic attitude he attributes to Schenker is typical of the satirical tradition, since Frye observes that "insofar as the satirist has a 'position' of his own, it is the preference of practice to theory, experience to metaphysics."<sup>36</sup>



The heroic image of Toscanini gives Cook another opportunity to bring the high low. Debunking Toscanini's alleged fidelity to the score, Cook unmasks this sort of "objective" approach as a modernist invention (p. 63). Again and again, people are portrayed as undermining their own intentions, doing the opposite of what they think they're doing, while Cook is the sober, detached observer.

When it comes to explicating the meaning of the Ninth, Cook does not endorse any particular interpretation but instead sees the piece in terms of romantic irony (p. 103). He suggests that the piece "is profoundly ambivalent" (p. 101) and "sends out incompatible messages" (p. 104). When "the music goes into quotation marks" (p. 104) by evoking a 1780s style toward the end of the finale, the score reveals "Beethoven's detachment from his own message" (p. 104), because of his detachment from his earlier style: "Nothing could more clearly indicate the retrospective, and therefore ultimately futile, nature of the Enlightenment ideals that Schiller's words proclaim" (p. 104). Against the conventional heroic rhetoric about the Ninth, Cook does not portray it as a vessel carrying a timeless meaning. Does it celebrate Enlightenment values? Yes, but it simultaneously calls them into question. Through Cook's description of it as ironically self-referential, as about itself, it becomes a tautology, equivalent only to itself: The Ninth is the Ninth. In terms of the gold standard analogy, one might say that the Ninth here has become a kind of zeno-money, money for which the bearer is entitled only to an identical replacement, not to its face value in gold.<sup>37</sup>

By interpellating us as pragmatists who are too self-aware to accept any of the received images of the Ninth unequivocally, Cook offers one possible solution to the cultural dilemma of the masterpiece guide. Here we might juxtapose Cook's monograph with another book on the Ninth by David Levy, published about the same time, that conforms more obviously to the traditional expectations of the masterpiece guide. Levy's rhetoric about "the ennobling forces that motivated its composer" (p. 17), for example, would be entirely out of place in Cook.<sup>38</sup>

The four legitimating narratives I have examined so far (Kramer, Shelemay, Peña, and Cook) exemplify what are often considered the four basic plot archetypes: romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire. These contrasting narrative modes should alert us to the contingency of emplotment. One might imagine these four authors recasting their work into alternative narrative forms. To take just two examples, I shall compare the work of Shelemay and Peña, both of whom deal with music that involves a coexistence of different cultures. What if Peña had emplotted his interpretation of Mexican American identity not as a dialectic of conflict but as a comic reconciliation of opposing tendencies? What if Shelemay had cast her study of Syrian Jewish identity not as a reconciliation of opposites but as a dialectic of conflict? This is not to say, of course, that these choices of plot are arbitrary; there are elements in the Mexican American situation that may not have analogs in the Ḥalabi culture. The strong religious identity of the latter might provide

sources of community that lessen the desire for cultural assimilation. (On the other hand, of course, the Mexican American community also has its sources of faith.)

## VI

Since narratives of disciplinary legitimation often include narratives of de-legitimation, it may be helpful to read two such narratives together to see more precisely how the construction of identity involves a mirror stage rivalry. Therefore I will stage a debate between two texts that foreground the construction of identity: Joseph Kerman's influential book *Contemplating Music*<sup>39</sup> and Kofi Agawu's provocative article "Does Music Theory Need Musicology?"<sup>40</sup> Kerman presents an ambitious critique of current research methods and their historical development, proposing a reorientation of musicology in the direction of historical criticism. Agawu, writing in a special issue of *Current Musicology* devoted to approaches to the discipline, explores "the juncture between music theory and music history" (p. 89), differentiating the two fields as he attempts to define an independent zone for theoretical inquiry. Both writers, therefore, construct discourses of disciplinary legitimation as they try to ground the identities of their respective research communities. Their texts, therefore, offer a particularly useful site for any analysis of the reproduction of identity.

Kerman and Agawu intervene in the longstanding debate between music history and theory. The title of one of Kerman's articles suggests his skepticism toward systematic theory and analysis: "How We Got into Analysis and How to Get Out."<sup>41</sup> Agawu's title seems like a rejoinder to Kerman's. Both mount effective and sometimes brilliant defenses of the priority of their respective fields, in the process articulating the presuppositions of a debate that is often conducted in veiled terms or reduced to a war of slogans. Just as a politician need only invoke "family values" or "a woman's right to choose" to activate an entire ideological complex in the hearer's mind, so the theorist need only deplore "lack of rigor" or the historian lament "formalism" to encapsulate a complete set of coded values and assumptions. Since one always approaches such controversies from within an institutional location, it is difficult to evaluate the theory/history debate at all. Much that seems self-evident to one who has invested in an identity as a theorist will appear quite differently to the historian, and vice versa. Given the close connection between aesthetics and subjectivity that I noted in chapter 2, attacks on one's disciplinary object can be taken very personally indeed, because it is the subject's own sense of unity that is at stake.

Agawu contends that the distribution of institutional power makes generalizing about the history/theory split urgent, despite the risk of "doing violence to the far more refined contributions of individual scholars" (p. 98). While I agree with him on this point, I would add that it is a matter not

merely of failing to do justice to individuals but of individuals not being able to do justice to *themselves* given these institutional constraints. The power structure, like a gravitational field, forms and deforms all objects in its vicinity—making knowledge possible while also regulating it. In describing disciplinary norms, we are trying to analyze what Foucault calls the normalization of collective identities, in which individuals police themselves according to standards they have internalized through participating in a collective discourse. Such discourses determine “who has the right to speak,” shaping the reception of individual efforts, especially in terms of whether a contribution is perceived as central or marginal, normal or deviant. In this competition for cultural capital, particularly within the managed university, prestige depends on reproduction: for research to be considered seminal it must be reproducible, offering models for imitation—paradigms that can be abstracted, appropriated, and recycled as they are filled with new content. By investigating normative profiles, we are asking why certain models have been widely disseminated. Far from ignoring research outside the mainstream, we are asking how the mainstream constitutes its authority, its power to exclude.

Kerman and Agawu construct their identities around what they, at least, consider radically different objects. One identifies with the text, the other with the historical context. In advocating a turn toward criticism, Kerman stresses the interpretation of works in their historical contexts. “I also believe that the most solid basis for criticism is history, rather than music theory or ethnomusicology. . . . What I uphold and try to practice is a kind of musicology oriented toward criticism, a kind of criticism oriented toward history” (p. 19). Agawu, on the other hand, believes that music theory is securely based on what he calls “the music itself,” that is, on the analysis of autonomous compositions. This choice of different disciplinary objects guarantees a polarity between them: almost anything said by one will be inverted by the other, so that their two texts resemble the reverse sides of a tapestry.

Thus where Kerman believes that “theory must be understood historically” (p. 60), Agawu argues that historical context must be theorized.

But where is this “cultural context” that historians insist on seeing in any analysis of a musical work? . . . [I]t is of no use insisting on context if you cannot specify its units and a set of procedures for discovering relationships embedded in context-to-music and music-to-context approaches. . . . There is more than a dash of irony that as theorists move beyond structuralism, they and not the historians will take on the challenge of theorizing context explicitly. (pp. 90–91)

While savoring this irony, however, Agawu ignores the possibility that as theorists theorize about context, they become historians of a sort. Far from

securing a stable identity for the theorist, then, the attempt to place music history under the theorist's controlling gaze may have a potential to disrupt that identity.

If Agawu wants to place music history under surveillance, Kerman has similar designs upon theory: "the potential of analysis is formidable, if it can only be taken out of the hothouse of theory and into the real world" (p. 18). The use of theory must be carefully monitored; it is a dangerous supplement that must not become too central; it exercises a seductive allure: "Critics are, in fact, *too* fascinated by analysis. I am thinking of the work of Edward Cone, Charles Rosen, and Leonard Meyer, and with some reservations I am thinking of my own work also" (pp. 72–73).

This hierarchy between history, analysis, and theory is exactly reversed by Agawu. Consider, for instance, his discussion of the relationship between Pieter C. van den Toorn's theoretical work on octatonicism in Stravinsky and Richard Taruskin's historical support for that research.<sup>42</sup> Agawu wants to minimize the need for such support: "Since when did theory need such 'confirmation'?" (p. 92). If van den Toorn has observed accurately, if he has seen the structures that are *there*, then historical confirmation is a mere supplement, interesting in itself, perhaps, but strictly speaking, superfluous: "The point, I should stress, is not that the historical precedents unearthed by Taruskin are in any way uninteresting in and of themselves. What is less certain is the significance of these precedents as corroborative evidence for patterns observed in Stravinsky's scores" (p. 92).

In this debate each wants to marginalize the other to achieve a stable identity; each wants to establish a hierarchy in which his discipline will be the privileged term. This is not to say that either wants to annihilate the other. Each is willing to live and let live, provided that he can assign the other a place in a hierarchy, reducing the other's discipline to supplementary status. As Derrida has shown, however, the peculiar logic of the supplement can exceed an author's control. A supplement is both extraneous and necessary, an ornament, an addition, yet also an indication of a lack; a *mere* supplement but also a necessary one. Writing, for example, has often been considered a supplement to speech, but as Derrida showed in a painstaking analysis of Rousseau, writing indicates an originary lack within speech itself.<sup>43</sup>

Feminist critics might point out that this supplementary logic is gender coded. In her analysis of the *Critique of Judgment*, for example, Barbara Claire Freeman has shown that Kant attributes a feminine character to the imagination, so that its sacrifice works to secure the experience of the sublime.<sup>44</sup> In consolidating disciplinary identities, a similar metaphorical scapegoating can occur. This becomes evident when we examine the political unconscious of the texts under discussion. In patriarchal discourse, women have often been represented as lacking *both* real individuality *and* the capacity for genuine cooperation. They are deprived of both individual and

group identity, portrayed as unable to transcend their competitive instincts to contribute to politics or culture in an organized way and thus needing male guidance and supervision.

If we examine the rhetorical strategies of these two texts we can detect similar moves: each man represents his own specialty as having, and the other's as lacking, both strong practitioners and a strong sense of disciplinary solidarity. Thus Agawu portrays theorists as united by their dedication to "the music itself," while "historians, by contrast, have had trouble isolating a collective purpose" (p. 90). He compares the relative solidarity among theorists with the "more heterogeneous and diffuse historical project" (p. 98). To anyone familiar with Genevieve Lloyd's history of the concept of reason, adjectives like "heterogeneous" and "diffuse" are hardly innocent; they are charged with cultural meaning in a history that associates maleness with the definite and distinct and femaleness with the vague and indefinite.<sup>45</sup> Agawu carefully insists that theoretical focus on "the music itself" must not be equated with narrowness: "only an uninformed critic would claim that the profile of contemporary theory is by any standards narrow" (p. 89). It is important for him to demonstrate that his discipline has both diversity and a unified purpose, while history is relatively lacking in both. And while theorists maintain a stance of rugged independence, historians are portrayed as relying on theory: "Has not the most influential historical work always needed theory whereas the best theoretical work rarely depended on the insights of conventional history?" (p. 90). From a feminist angle, one might paraphrase this loosely: "Has not the most influential woman always needed a man, whereas the best men rarely depend on women?"

In a valuable essay on the discourse of music theory, Fred Everett Maus contends that theorists have a propensity for masculine language.<sup>46</sup> As we return to Kerman, however, it will become clear that this attempt to seize a masculine language is by no means limited to any single branch of musical scholarship. Kerman is equally eager to attribute a feminine heterogeneity to theory, portraying it as lacking a unified purpose, perched between stultifying orthodoxies that are collapsing and a present state of disarray:

A recent questionnaire sent to a group of thirty-odd theorists—mostly younger theorists who are not composers—elicited responses over a bewilderingly wide range of largely independent pursuits. About the most that can be said is that the old orthodoxies have clearly weakened. Beyond that no trend is clearly discernible, at least by me. (p. 63)

Notice that if thirty-odd historians had shown a similar variety in their responses, Kerman might well interpret it as a sign of healthy pluralism. If theorists work independently, however, they are depicted as lacking a coherent agenda; if they unify to pursue a common goal, they are marching in lockstep.

By ascribing a feminine heterogeneity to each other's disciplines, both Kerman and Agawu seem to attempt to consolidate stable, centered, masculine identities for themselves, and for readers who identify with them. We are encouraged to identify with a secure group, one that fosters both individual differences and collective solidarity, a group firmly in possession of a clear disciplinary object. This feeling of solidarity, however, may depend on what Luce Irigaray calls a "patriarchal genealogy," involving the suppression of heterogeneity within one's own field.<sup>47</sup>

In Kerman's case, this is evident in his treatment of Heinrich Schenker, the influential Viennese theorist. Kerman writes: "There are (a few) musicologists who profess to admire Schenker, but I cannot think of any major study in historical criticism that draws on his work in any substantial way" (p. 85). Notice how carefully this sentence works to contain and marginalize Schenker, to neutralize any possible influence he might have on historians. The admission that some historians admire Schenker is simultaneously qualified by the parenthetical phrase "(a few)" and further reduced by the verbal modifier "profess to." If there are any studies in historical criticism with a Schenkerian slant, these must be doubly marginalized, their status called into question: "I cannot think of any major study [there might be some minor studies out there but their reliance on Schenker presumably undercuts their value] . . . that draws on his work in any substantial way [if any major studies draw on Schenker, their reference to him must be minimal]." These conclusions that the reader is invited to draw are further underlined in the next sentence, in which Kerman implies that James Webster exaggerated his indebtedness to Schenker. "Webster's important study of 'Schubert's Sonata Form and Brahms's First Maturity,' which uses greatly simplified Schenkerian graphs to good effect, uses them to enlarge upon an insight of Tovey's which owes nothing to Schenker" (p. 85).

Kerman wants to construct a unified identity for historical critics, and it must owe nothing, or as little as possible, to Schenker or music theory. A reader who resists the text's interpellation might detect some anxiety in these strategies of containment. The suspicion that something is being repressed, that some threat to the integrity of the disciplinary self is being warded off, surfaces again later, when another musicologist must be detached from too close a relationship to Schenker. "For all his professed admiration for Schenker, Lewis Lockwood's analysis is not very Schenkerian" (p. 141). The reader who wonders how Kerman developed his instinct for separating *echt* Schenkerians from merely "professed" Schenkerians might consult Kerman's extensive list of works cited. Under Schenker's name one finds the following entry: "Schenker, Heinrich. See Forte, Allen, 'Schenker's Conception of Musical Structure'" (p. 247). Had someone written a critical response to Kerman that relied entirely on second-hand accounts, Kerman would rightly protest. Yet it is strange that in a lengthy critique of Schenker's thought and influence, Kerman never quotes him or allows him to

speak in his own voice. This violation of scholarly etiquette constitutes a significant blind spot in Kerman's text.

This attempt to minimize the importance of theory extends far beyond denigrating Schenker. Any theorist whose work Kerman admires is reclassified as not really a theorist or as resembling a critic in terms of his or her most admirable qualities. Thus Edward Cone "is less a theorist than an analyst and less an analyst than a critic" (p. 197). E. T. A. Hoffmann: "I would not begrudge Hoffmann the title of 'theorist,' then, though I think he can be more handsomely described as a critic" (p. 67). Leonard Meyer's *Music, the Arts, and Ideas* "is not music theory, of course" (p. 111). Kerman is following a common rhetorical strategy; by characterizing an opponent's terms as unchanging and static, one's own terms can be allowed greater mobility. Music theory is repeatedly described as "narrow," "myopic," and "rigid," and whatever contradicts this description is classified as "not theory." Kerman is unwilling to admit that a critique might lead to an expansion or revision of the concept of theory rather than a rejection. This is evident in his description of musicologists who work with medieval or baroque theory: "their interest is in interpreting theory, not generating it" (p. 62). By establishing a dichotomy between "interpreting" and "generating," Kerman forecloses any chance that one might combine these tasks in imaginative ways.

This demotion of theory stands in a paradoxical relationship to Kerman's own choice of literary criticism as a privileged model for musical criticism, since literary criticism has engaged theoretical issues with increasing urgency over the past several decades. Indeed, today the field is often called literary theory, or simply theory. This theorizing has transformed the character and even the object of literary studies. Kerman's suspicion of theorizing affiliates him with an older model of literary criticism as a genteel pastime, as a form of connoisseurship. This raises the question whether Kerman's rejection of theory is an unconscious legacy of the positivistic musicology he has hoped to supersede.

Returning to Agawu, one can see a similar attempt to immobilize history. He insists that theorists have a secure object based solidly on "the music itself," but he adds a significant qualification almost in passing: "overlooking ontological problems, that, however interesting in themselves, rarely undermine our commonsensical notions that we are dealing with specifiable objects" (p. 90). Confidence in the theoretical project can only be maintained if embarrassing questions about the status of the objects under study are assigned to the periphery. These questions may be "interesting in themselves" and they may supplement research, but they must not be allowed to interfere with "commonsensical intuition." Cultural objects, however, do not possess the reassuring solidity of natural phenomena, and appeals to common sense may not work quite as easily as the gesture of Dr. Johnson refuting Bishop Berkeley's idealism by kicking a stone. Common sense, as Catherine Belsey has remarked, is a complex cultural construction that is loaded with theoretical and historical presuppositions. It is precisely the



supposed self-evidence of the text's identity, and similar common-sense notions, that a variety of poststructuralist approaches have attacked. A certain anxiety surfaces again when Agawu refers to "the insistence" (on the part of theorists) "that the musical text, however defined, together with an explicit methodology for its understanding, form the basis of theorizing" (p. 98). An enormous loophole opens with the words "however defined." What if the text must be defined *historically*? By refusing to acknowledge the discursive construction of his disciplinary objects, Agawu confirms the existing boundaries between history and theory rather than challenging them. He is unwilling to examine the relations between power and knowledge in constituting the objects themselves.

In this debate, each considers his identity to be a stable possession, a static entity. Agawu concludes that "theory is theory and history is history" (p. 98). Kerman would doubtless concur in viewing each field as closed and self-identical. Neither is able to acknowledge the extent to which each discipline disrupts the other's identity.

Yet consider the symmetry between their positions. One proclaims that theory is disunified, devoid of common purpose; the other argues that history is fragmented, heterogeneous, diffuse. One believes that theory must be understood historically, the other that historical context must be theorized. One wants to subordinate theory to analysis and subsume both under historical criticism; the other wants to reverse this hierarchy. There is a fundamental symmetry in both positions, so that each is the mirror image of the other. In these mutual attempts to marginalize the other, could it be that the danger lies within? Is it possible, to borrow a Lacanian formula, that each receives his truth from the other in inverted form?

## VII

If I am correct that neither text nor context is self-identical, then the attempt to base one's professional identity on either one can never fully succeed. History and theory can only sustain their identities by incorporating their antagonism internally: each field splits into a theoretical and historical domain, so that the structure of binary oppositions between the fields is reproduced within each. Thus alongside research into "the music itself" music theory includes a historical branch, called the history of music theory. Music history, meanwhile, includes a theoretical component alongside direct study of the past: the study of historiography, which considers the writing of history at an abstract level that can rightly be called the theory of history. This reproduction of the opposition within each field creates and abyssal structure, a *mise en abyme*. Each field becomes the mirror image of the other (see fig. 3.1). These internal divisions are hierarchical: historical theory and theoretical history are the marginalized others within their respective fields. This is not to deny, of course, that there are



## Music history

## Music theory

<i>Music history proper</i>	<i>Theory of history</i>	<i>History of theory</i>	<i>Music theory proper</i>
(inquiry into historical and social "context")	legitimizes music history by stabilizing the distinction between primary and secondary texts	legitimizes music theory by providing it with a historical narrative of progress and continuity	(inquiry into "the music itself")

Figure 3.1. The fields of music history and music theory as mirror images.

specialists for whom these activities are primary. Ian Bent, for example, believes that the history of theory should be accorded a more central place, while Leo Treitler has made similar appeals on behalf of historiography.<sup>48</sup> But if we consider how these specialties function within normal research, they have a secondary status. Through this subordination they work to consolidate the fields of theory and history as independent disciplines, as I shall briefly argue.

Historical theory helps to confirm the autonomy of music theory by providing it with a historical narrative of legitimation: there is a unified entity called music theory because it has a history. This history introduces both continuity and discontinuity into the discipline. Theory is continuous with its past because it has a unified history, a history of gradual development, yet also discontinuous because past and present are usually related as chrysalis and butterfly, as if theory divides into an ideological prehistory and a present, more scientific phase. In this narrative, present-day theory is presumed to have attained closer proximity to its object, "the music itself." In general, historical theory is treated as a corpse that is exhumed and autopsied, studied either for purely antiquarian interest or as a precursor to the present. At most, historical theory becomes a supplement to contemporary theory, a marginal phenomenon that helps confirm the primary status of the present.

But the assumption that theory is a unified entity that persists over time is open to question. In chapter 2 I cited Foucault's warning that the persistence of a disciplinary name over time does not necessarily indicate the persistence of a disciplinary object. The same precaution should be taken with respect to music theory. It has functioned within radically different disciplinary constellations, sometimes constituting its objects with the aid of theology, philosophy, mathematics, linguistics, psychology, cybernetics, and so on. A number of diverse functions are often collected under this term, from the most arcane speculative theory to practical drills in ear training and sight singing. These functions sometimes have only a tenuous mutual connection; often they are grouped together primarily because they have tradi-

tionally been taught by individuals institutionally labeled as theorists. We should be wary of a patriarchal genealogy that suppresses the heterogeneity in the field. To conclude that Pythagoras and Zarlino, Tinctoris and Rameau, Koch and Schenker, Riemann and Forte are engaged in a common enterprise—and that these figures have more in common with each other than they do with music historians—should by no means be taken for granted.

Notice how the history of theory functions in Agawu's essay to consolidate a stable disciplinary field. To argue for the autonomy of theory, Agawu must become a historian, constructing a brief historical narrative of legitimation to establish the "progress" and "purely technical advance" in his field. He recounts the history of the breakup between the AMS and the SMT, noting the "considerable gains in consolidating the practice of Anglo-American theory and analysis" (p. 89) since then, and suggesting that "even a cursory comparison of Schenker to Kirnberger . . . or a comparison of Rosen, Ratner, Dahlhaus or Rothstein to Koch and his contemporaries should leave one uneasy about granting a privilege to old thought" (p. 94).

This privileging of present-day theory over historical theory allows us to exempt the present from contingency, from too close an examination of its historical and cultural construction, its political and social interests. Theory becomes a "pure" field, which can be judged by canons of rationalism (internal logic) or empiricism (fidelity to the object).

Something similar happens in the field of history, which can only sustain its identity by marginalizing the theory of history. We have already seen how unstable the objects of historical inquiry can be; they acquire their relative stability through a discursive act of construction that is saturated with theory. Through such discursive constructions, the difference between primary and secondary texts can become problematic. By constructing a tertiary layer of texts—by writing commentaries on the commentaries—historiography can be pressed into service to legitimate the enterprise of music history, stabilizing the objects of knowledge by presenting a hierarchy of textual levels. This hierarchy starts with the primary texts (the music of the past, its documents, the social and cultural context), continues with secondary texts (the history of the past, the commentary on the primary texts), and ends with tertiary texts (the commentaries on the commentaries). Historiography has a potential to boomerang and disturb this scheme, as I will suggest later. But generally speaking, historiography functions as an enterprise of legitimation by being treated as an independent specialty whose results can be appropriated as a supplement to normal research.

It is now possible, I think, to understand the history/theory debate and the intense anxieties that exhaust themselves in rhetorical warfare. Far from defending itself from external threats, each side must defend itself against the anxiety that the other will undermine it from within. Neither side can achieve mastery and neither can control the other because neither can control its own objects of knowledge. These objects could be stabilized

if one could establish a stable hierarchy between theory and history, text and context, inside and outside, content and frame. But the belief that either field has priority, that either has the upper hand, is undermined as soon as theory erupts within history and history within theory.

This gives us a new insight into the paradoxical nature of the crisis that I described in chapter 1, the coexistence of what I called the Tower of Babel and the Ministry of Truth. In the history/theory debate, the factions engage in rhetorical warfare that is characterized by mutual condescension and a competition for dominance. At the same time, however, there is a deep underlying complicity between them, because both form their identities in precisely the same way, as mirror images of each other. By misrecognizing their dependency on each other, they misrecognize the sources of their own identity.

## VIII

How might we form identities in ways less violent? How can we avoid the hierarchical dualisms through which both Kerman and Agawu try to maintain relationships of dominance and subordination between their respective fields? It is difficult to imagine alternatives to hierarchical thinking because it is so ingrained in our language and mental imagery. Through his use of models drawn from topology, however, Lacan found ways to break this sort of deadlock. According to Bruce Fink, Lacan “breaks with the age-old Western conception of the world as a series of concentric circles or spheres,” using instead “such paradoxical topological surfaces as the Möbius band, the Klein bottle, and the cross-cap” as models.<sup>49</sup>

Let us try the experiment of rethinking the relations between history and theory through the model of a Moebius strip. To form a Moebius strip, take a narrow piece of paper and twist the ends to join the opposite sides. Although this figure has two sides at any discrete point, it is actually one continuous surface; if you advance far enough in one direction, you find yourself on the other side, without having passed over at any particular point. Rather than conceiving history and theory as two separate fields that could only ever enter into relations of hierarchical dominance or subordination, we might consider theory and history as impulses or activities rather than as fields that are external to each other. By temporarily bracketing or suspending one impulse, we can artificially isolate a “pure” historical or theoretical mode of attention. We could trope these modes through various pairs of oppositions, including synchronic/diachronic, text/context, and so on. But if you follow your theoretical impulse with absolute fidelity, you will discover historical contingencies as you encounter the culture that has framed the questions in advance by constituting you as a subject. The same applies to history. If you pursue your historical impulse with relentless rigor, theoretical questions regarding the constitution of historical facts become

unavoidable. As we travel around the Moebius strip, theory becomes history becomes theory becomes history in a never-ending cycle, as each impulse turns into its opposite without ever reaching a synthesis or coming to rest.

The resulting dynamic resembles the radical reflexivity that Shoshana Felman finds in psychoanalysis. Unlike the types of reflexivity found in traditional humanism and the epistemology of self-reflection, in which there is a symmetry between the subject and the object of reflection, between the self and itself or between self and other, the reflexivity involved in psychoanalysis depends on an asymmetry:

Self-reflection, the traditional fundamental principle of consciousness and of conscious thought, is what Lacan traces back to "the mirror stage," to the symmetrical dual structure of the Imaginary. Self-reflection is always a mirror reflection, that is, the illusory functioning of symmetrical reflexivity, of reasoning by the illusory principle of symmetry between self and self as well as between self and other; a symmetry that subsumes all difference within a delusion of a unified and homogeneous identity. But the new Freudian mode of reflexivity precisely shifts, displaces, and unsettles the very boundaries between self and other, subverting by the same token the symmetry that founds their dichotomy, their clear-cut opposition to each other.<sup>50</sup>

In my model of theory and history as a Moebius strip, the boundaries between the fields are unsettled and decentered by historicizing theory and theorizing history. Rather than being a transparent agent whose self-reflection might confirm a unified identity, the theoretical subject has, so to speak, a historical unconscious that prevents it from being self-identical. Theory is always already embedded in larger cultural formations; this cultural inscription is constitutive of any theoretical project rather than being a supplementary addition. Since music is always mediated through a complex set of cultural texts, both music-theoretical and social, the theorist is always a historian of theory, dealing with interpretations of interpretations. In much the same way, the historian has a theoretical unconscious. The theoretical construction of historical objects compels us to recognize the historian's implication in his or her own knowledge, along with the desires and interests, both political and social, that enter into any particular way of constructing historical objects.

This model gives us a way to rethink the relations between music history and theory that involves neither hierarchical subordination nor any sort of simple compromise or blending of the two fields. Their relation involves the sort of reflexivity that Felman describes, "a reflexivity to the second degree, that is, an analytic dialogue with the otherness of another reflexivity."<sup>51</sup> The mutual interrogation of theory and history can never end.

Although I began with Kerman and Agawu as representatives of a particular partisan rivalry, my concern has been to revitalize what would otherwise be a stale debate by showing that it cannot be understood within the

limits of the fields institutionally labeled “music history” and “music theory,” so that the conflicting impulses I have identified must not be construed in the narrow sense of music history and theory. When taken more broadly, the model of “two interfering reflexivities” also illuminates the dilemma facing ethnomusicologists today as they “postulate and calibrate the historiography of their field.”<sup>52</sup> Since the history of their discipline is intertwined with that of colonialism and postcolonialism, ethnomusicologists have begun to analyze the effects of that history on their explanatory models. At the same time, however, any understanding of that history also depends on explanatory models, which can themselves be contextualized, so the pattern of mutual interference that I have described as historicizing theory while theorizing history prevails here as well. In a recent article that contests the assumptions of much current research in ethnomusicology, in particular the tendency to privilege sociocultural context over the potentially formal and autonomous dimension of music, Martin Scherzinger complements the point I am making when he writes that “no amount of context-sensitivity eludes its own formalist tendencies” while at the same time “no amount of formalism eludes its socio-contextual insights.”<sup>53</sup>

We could extend the idea of “two interfering reflexivities” further still, because it results from the textual nature of disciplinary objects in the humanities. If we regard these texts, to cite Bakhtin, as “any coherent complex of signs,” then they differ from the types of objects usually found in the natural sciences (although Bakhtin wisely refuses to draw a hard boundary here) in that they involve “thoughts about thoughts, experiences of experiences, words about words, and texts about texts.” Since these objects exist “*on the boundary between two consciousnesses, two subjects*,”<sup>54</sup> they cannot be wholly disentangled from the interpretive decisions that frame them. The act of framing that establishes a limit between inside and outside is always contingent; as Derrida writes in *The Truth in Painting*, “there is no natural frame.”<sup>55</sup> By stressing the image of a Möbius strip, I want to combat the tendency of traditional hermeneutics to treat the dialectic between text and interpreter as reaching some ideal point of synthesis. The next chapter will consider some special problems that musical events pose in this regard.

## 4

### THE OBJECTS OF MUSICAL RESEARCH (1)

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#### I

What constitutes the identity of a composition?<sup>1</sup> For that matter, what constitutes the identity of anything heard as a musical event—say, perhaps, a single phrase such as the first ten measures of Mozart’s Piano Sonata in G major, K. 283? (See ex. 4.1, to which we’ll return.) In asking these questions we must engage some philosophical issues that may seem remote from the everyday concerns of musical scholars, many of whom would prefer to focus on what they consider more practical matters. Yet every work of musical research contains an implicit philosophy of music, revealing assumptions about what music is and what it does—assumptions that all too often remain unexamined. The problem of compositional identity seems an especially suggestive topic for investigating how unresolved issues of a speculative nature may have ramifications in the practical realm.

On the one hand, in practical listening experience, the question of identity seems easy enough to answer. We can easily distinguish one piece from another; we seldom confuse the Mozart sonata cited in example 4.1 with *Also sprach Zarathustra*. We can all play “Name That Tune!”, and often recognize familiar pieces from just a few notes. We can usually identify compositions even when transcribed for other media: a whistled scrap of melody will often serve just as well as an orchestral rendition for us to recognize Beethoven’s Fifth. On the other hand, when we try to move from this intuitive level to theorize compositional identity more rigorously, we encounter obstacles. Statements about what is “in” a particular piece, for example—whether we consider structural analyses or statements about musical meaning and expression—seldom meet universal approbation. Moreover, innumerable performances of the same piece are possible and might be recognized as valid interpretations. Yet we can also perceive some performances as distortions, so that identity is not arbitrary. Solutions to this prob-



Example 4.1. Mozart, Piano Sonata K. 283, I, mm. 1–10.

lem seem to vacillate between pragmatism and idealism, either seeking practical solutions to the problems of variant readings by cataloguing them or imagining some Platonic idea of a piece, existing in some eternal realm, that authorizes all true performances.

Anthony Easthope has suggested a productive solution to this dilemma by invoking Saussure's distinction between signifier and signified. A text has a relative identity as a collection of signifiers that can be transmitted in material form and repeated over time, but the signifieds can change.

Although every repetition of a text is slightly different, the fixed order of the syntagmatic chain (accessible only in association with the other levels) does assure the text of a relative identity in its repetitions. . . . [T]he identity of a text is not fixed once and for all but a *relative* material identity which can give rise to a repetition in and for the reader with all that repetition implies by way of difference (whether a repetition by the same reader at different times or by different readers at the same time).<sup>2</sup>

Easthope's remarks illuminate not only literary texts but also all allographic arts, that is, all arts that depend on realization and exist in multiple performances.<sup>3</sup> To specify the identity of anything that is subject to repeated performances, something must persist through all the different versions, re-

maintaining the same through time. But this invariant element is not a Platonic idea or essence, it is a set of signifiers. Thus even an electronic piece that exists in only one version would have only a relative identity, because its signifieds are also subject to change.

Easthope's insight, however, opens up new problems even as it lays old ones to rest, because of the paradoxical relationship between identity and repetition. In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida examines Edmund Husserl's attempts to ground phenomenology upon an experience of pure self-presence, prior to the institution of signs. Derrida argues that, on the contrary, there can be no sense of the presence-of-the-present without identity, and identity depends on signs. Unless I am aware of my persistence through time, I cannot experience the present. Since nothing can function as a sign unless it is repeated, Derrida concludes that identity depends on repetition: "the presence-of-the-present is derived from repetition and not the reverse."<sup>4</sup> There is a kind of "originary repetition," a "primordial structure of repetition," because any experience depends on the repetition of signs without there being a founding instance, an origin prior to repetition that would establish a hierarchy between original and repetition, or between first instance of a sign and subsequent instances.

All of this may seem rather abstract, but its potential to jolt us into rethinking the identity of musical events becomes evident if we consider the nature of musical repetition. Let us start with phrase rhythm and the question of expanded repetitions. According to Heinrich Schenker, a phrase expansion "follows from one or more measures of a metric prototype."<sup>5</sup> In straightforward cases, a basic phrase and its expanded repetition will be separate events: the basic phrase will be heard first, followed by an expanded repetition in which something will be added (one or more measures of the basic phrase might be repeated, or something might be interpolated within the phrase or added at the end). The expansion might be heard in immediate juxtaposition to the prototype, or they might appear in parallel sections of a piece (such as exposition and recapitulation). To illustrate this procedure, consider the adventures of the phrase shown in example 4.1. Mozart immediately expands this unit by repeating measures 5–10 and changing the register of measures 5–6 but otherwise leaving these bars intact (see ex. 4.2).

Often, however, the prototype is not explicitly stated. A phrase might be heard as the expansion of a simpler underlying model, as an elaboration of a basic phrase that is nowhere given. In such cases the prototype must be reconstructed retrospectively and hypothesized, theorized into existence. This is not to say that such prototypes present only theoretical interest. On the contrary, for many listeners the tension produced by such expansions—even their potential to regulate one's very breathing—is a vital part of their aural experience. Rather than a temporal succession, in which the prototype *precedes* its expanded repetition, we have here a kind of *originary repetition*, in which repetition and expansion appear together (see fig. 4.1).



**Allegro**

4

8

11

15

*p*

*fp*

*f*

*p*

*fp*

*f*

Example 4.2. Mozart, Piano Sonata K. 283, I, mm. 1–16.

Basic phrase —————> followed by expanded repetition

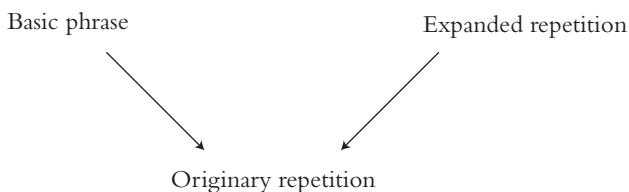


Figure 4.1. Two types of phrase expansion.

For an instance of this second type, we need only return to example 4.1. Although measures 1–16 constitute an expansion, the phrase in measures 1–10 can itself be heard as an expansion of an underlying eight-bar norm. Yet nothing precedes it that might constitute a prototype. William E. Caplin has suggested a plausible version of an eight-bar phrase that underlies Mozart’s expansion, but this is only a hypothesis;<sup>6</sup> many other reconstructed prototypes might be possible (see ex. 4.3).

In such cases, establishing the identity of the phrase consists in reconstructing an absent prototype, so that we can establish a hierarchy between a nucleus and an expanded repetition, to specify exactly *what* is being repeated. Yet such hypothetical basic phrases are by no means uncontroversial. In attempting to provide some criteria for verifying when such constructions are correct, William Rothstein raises a number of issues.

If a basic phrase is supposed to underlie a longer (presumably expanded) phrase, the basic phrase must make sense (1) when played alone and (2) when substituted for the actual phrase in the composition. The basic phrase must sound complete as a phrase by itself, and, when played in context, it must fill approximately the same functions as the actual, longer phrase. (However, substituting the basic phrase for the expanded one may reveal some of the reasons why the phrase was expanded in the first place.) Furthermore, the basic phrase must resemble the expanded phrase closely enough so that the latter can be understood as an elaboration of the former. . . . As a final test, it should be possible to convince other sensitive listeners that one’s analysis is correct.<sup>7</sup>

As Rothstein himself admits, however, “every statement in the above paragraph raises further questions. What, for example, does it mean for a phrase to ‘sound complete’?” In response to such problems, Carl Schachter has humorously suggested appointing a “Commissar of Metrics” who might decide when a phrase rhythmic analysis is correct.<sup>8</sup>



Example 4.3. Mozart, Piano Sonata K. 283, I: Hypothetical basic phrase for the opening phrase, after William E. Caplin, *Classical Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 36.

Sometimes an entire piece might be heard as such an expansion. Schachter has proposed, for example, that several of Chopin's Preludes constitute expansions of an underlying period structure, in which the consequent phrase, normally the same length as the antecedent, is inflated.<sup>9</sup> The B Minor Prelude would be one example; here the eight-measure antecedent is followed by a twenty-two bar consequent plus coda. As soon as we try to determine exactly *what* is being expanded, however, we run into difficulties. In the case of the B Minor Prelude, for instance, Howard Cinnamon has proposed two hypothetical versions of the eight-bar prototype for the consequent phrase, which he calls "Model 1" and "Model 2."<sup>10</sup> Yet he admits that neither is completely satisfactory; one could imagine others. The prototype here leads a phantom existence; it accompanies (precedes? follows?) the music like a shadow.

Thus the entire B Minor Prelude is an expanded repetition of *itself*: it is an expansion of a sixteen-bar prototype that is nowhere given. To establish the identity of this piece once and for all it would be necessary to say *here* is the original, *there* is the expansion, establishing a hierarchy between the two. Instead, however, the piece exemplifies what Derrida calls *différance*: it differs from itself—its identity is deferred. It is precisely because the identity of the piece is uncertain that we need analysis. Analysis attempts to measure the distance between the absent prototype and the expansion, between the piece and itself. Because this identity can never be established once and for all, the piece is inexhaustible; it can be heard and analyzed again and again, and it is always possible to hear a different piece, to reconstruct the prototype in a different way. But the conditions of *possibility* for analysis are

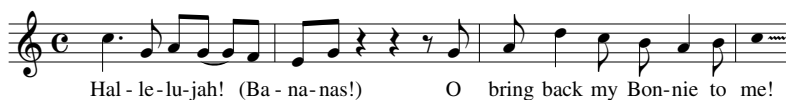
also its conditions of *impossibility*; since the musical object, “the music itself,” is not self-identical, its repetitions can never be completely mastered.

Repetition can also undermine the hierarchy between text and context. This becomes evident if we consider Derrida’s notion of “iterability.” In *Limited Inc* he argues that communication depends on iterability: for a sign to convey meaning it must be susceptible to repetition; the *spacing* between signs that allows them to be repeated also allows them to be transplanted, detached, placed in new contexts. This suggests, however, that the conditions of possibility for meaning are also its conditions of impossibility: “iterability is at once the condition and the limit of mastery.”<sup>11</sup> Communication depends on iterability, but this releases a potential for miscommunication because signs can be inserted into new contexts. In this “citational grafting,” the traces of former contexts can inhabit the new contexts, so that the boundaries between texts become porous—borders can be overrun and the hierarchy between content and frame can be overturned.

Consider the potential of this to affect compositional identity. Many attempts to ground the identity of pieces involve the concept of motivic logic—the repetition and transformation of motives guarantees the unity and identity of a piece. Rudolph Réti is only one of the best-known advocates of such a view, but it has a long heritage.<sup>12</sup> E. T. A. Hoffmann’s review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony in the early nineteenth century, for example, already exemplifies a thematicist approach,<sup>13</sup> as does Adolf Schubring’s analysis of motivic transformations in the Brahms Requiem, an analysis dating from the 1870s.<sup>14</sup>

Yet a countertradition exists that is frankly skeptical about motivic unity. Donald Francis Tovey, for example, frequently dismissed alleged motivic connections with remarks like “there is a B in Both,” repudiating the faith in motivic logic by saying “it is no more logical than a string of puns.”<sup>15</sup> Hans Keller vehemently rejected Tovey’s position.<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Dunsby and Arnold Whittall share this patronizing attitude toward Tovey and suggest that his naiveté concerning motivic unity helped to retard the development of serious musical analysis in England.<sup>17</sup> From a Derridean perspective, however, Tovey’s position is no more naive than Keller’s. Both the advocates and the opponents of motivic logic grasp one horn of a dilemma: the very potential for internal coherence that motivic repetition can provide can turn into incoherence by leading outside the piece, creating an infinite stream of intertextual associations.

An essay by Sigmund Spaeth wittily encapsulates this paradox. Spaeth facetiously suggested that familiar tunes might have been composed out of recycled bits of other tunes. He showed that the melody of “Yes! We Have No Bananas!” for instance, stitches together the first four notes of the Hallelujah Chorus with a phrase from “My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean” (see example 4.4). Although intended as a *reductio ad absurdum*, his idea embodies a profound truth about music analysis. The potential for repetition—the



Example 4.4. “Yes! We Have No Bananas” with text underlay after Sigmund Spaeth, *Words and Music* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926), 35–36.

iterability—of a motive, which allows it to function as a source of internal coherence in, say, the Hallelujah Chorus, also allows it to wander, to summon up other contexts, to evoke what Roland Barthes calls the *déjà lu*, the already read or, in this case, the *déjà entendu*, the already heard.<sup>18</sup>

Faced with this paradox, music analysis often tries to police the boundaries of a piece by differentiating legitimate repetitions that create motivic coherence within the piece from illegitimate repetitions that lead outside the piece, disrupting the hierarchy between inside and outside, content and frame. This strategy reproduces a phenomenon that Derrida observes throughout the history of Western metaphysics, the attempt to preserve a hierarchy between good and bad repetition, true and false repetition, as when Plato tried to distinguish true and false copies. Such a hierarchy, however, is always vulnerable to deconstruction.

Heinrich Schenker’s theoretical writings provide perhaps the best place to see this strategy at work, because the very rigor of his attempts to distinguish legitimate and illegitimate repetition reveals the paradoxes of identity. Through his concept of the *Ursatz*, or fundamental structure, Schenker attempted to show the organic coherence of compositions by revealing a connected melodic structure, in which all melodic diminutions can be heard as prolonging other diminutions in a process of mental retention. Just as Kant regards the mind as a causally connected series of mental states, so Schenker regards the unity of the piece as a causally connected series of musical events, connected through mental retention.<sup>19</sup> In his later writings, he increasingly differentiates organic repetitions, which belong to this process of mental retention, from mechanical repetitions, which do not. He delights in pointing out concealed repetitions (*verborgene Wiederholungen*), motivic transformations that are not immediately apparent, often involving enlargements of motivic details, establishing a rapport of structural levels in which a large-scale arpeggiation, for example, might compose out a small one. By the time of *Free Composition*, Schenker has invested these concealed repetitions with almost mystical authority; they transcend ordinary repetition, having the potential to confer organic unity, as opposed to merely surface repetitions of an obvious type. Schenker mobilizes all the oppositions familiar from the traditions of organicist thought: those between organicism and mechanism, internal and external, natural and artificial, and so on, to valorize these concealed repetitions.

Because these organic repetitions are attached to the fundamental structure, “even repetitions which do not fall within the concept of a motive” are organic, while those not connected to the *Ursatz* are not related to each other, even if they are externally identical, like counterfeit coins. To maintain this distinction, however, Schenker must guard the borders of pieces, declaring war on what he calls “wandering melodies,” melodic or motivic resemblances among different works, whether by the same composer or different composers. Thus he dismisses allegations, for example, that the second movement of Mozart’s Symphony in G Minor, K. 550, is related to a similar motive in the finale of the “Jupiter” Symphony.<sup>20</sup> He ridicules Wilhelm Werker’s attempts to establish motivic links between the preludes and fugues in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.<sup>21</sup> He repudiates Wolfgang Gräser’s statement that the whole *Art of the Fugue* constitutes “a single gigantic fugue.”<sup>22</sup> Even the identical fugue subject in multiple fugues by the same composer does not suffice to make this collection into a single piece.

Schenker’s attitude is a response to what we might call the Sigmund Spaeth principle; he is trying to construct a theory of musical coherence that will not open pieces to the infinite intertextuality of the *déjà entendu*. Yet Schenker’s very consistency, the fierce integrity with which he polices the boundaries of compositions and defends them against the intrusion of the *déjà entendu*, has unintended effects, producing curious inconsistencies elsewhere in his work. Because he believes that only repetitions that are attached to the fundamental structure through a process of mental retention are organic, and because he believes that each movement has a separate fundamental structure, he has no way to deal with multimovement designs. His analyses of multimovement works, including some of his most ambitious, comprehensive analyses of symphonies by Mozart and Beethoven, seldom suggest motivic connections among the movements. Each movement is discussed in isolation; in most cases there is no reference to transmovemental concerns *at all*. When he does acknowledge such connections, his references tend to be brief and disappointing. In his enormous monograph on Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, for example, his only statement about transmovemental connections comes at the very end, when he suggests that the descending fifth that concludes the fourth movement constitutes an answer to the question posed by the descending fourth of the principal theme of the first movement.<sup>23</sup> In his explanatory edition of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata, Op. 110, he makes a similar observation about the relationship between the descending third that opens the first movement and the descending third that closes the finale.<sup>24</sup> In his explanatory edition of another late Beethoven sonata, Op. 101, he admits that the theme of the finale evolves out of the reminiscence of the first movement that precedes it.<sup>25</sup>

Even in cases where Schenker’s own analytical graphs reveal potential structural relations among separate movements—and this constitutes a remarkable blind spot in his work but one with its own logic—he cannot ac-

knowledge them. His separate graphs of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 27, No. 2, for example, all show the same initial ascent to the primary melodic tone, involving a large-scale arpeggiation G $\sharp$ –C $\sharp$ –E (which becomes A $\flat$ –D $\flat$ –F in the second movement).<sup>26</sup> But it was Ernst Oster who pointed this out in an editorial footnote to his translation of *Free Composition*; Schenker remains silent on this point.<sup>27</sup> Since such large-scale arpeggiations are a feature of numerous Schenkerian analyses, they can only be organically connected if they are part of the same process of mental retention, if they are attached to the same fundamental structure; to deny this would open the door to saying that all arpeggiations in all pieces are related. Oster himself was implicitly aware of this constraint, since he stressed that Beethoven called the piece a "Sonata quasi una fantasia"; by regarding the whole sonata as a single fantasia, Oster found a loophole through which he could smuggle these multimovement connections into a Schenkerian context, without violating Schenker's own precepts.<sup>28</sup> Ironically, then, despite Schenker's desire to found an organic theory, he must treat the individual movements of multimovement designs as being only mechanically and externally related.

Let no one think, however, that I am accusing Schenker of a lapse that other theorists might correct. Schenker's theory is a construction that tries to suture the gap between the two sides of a paradox. But any theory must perforce be a construction; we can negotiate these paradoxes in various ways but never eliminate them. Any solutions must be partial, provisional, and local.

## II

Questions about the identity of a composition and the undecidability of its boundaries become particularly pressing in the case of what we might call the *cryptocycle*. I propose this term to describe cases where analysts purport to discover cyclic connections among works previously considered separate entities, subsuming multiple works into a kind of *Überwerk*, usually on the basis of alleged motivic resemblances. Perhaps the first analyses of this type involve the late Beethoven string quartets; various writers have suggested that the Quartets Opp. 130, 131, and 132 constitute a unified cycle, despite the lack of any such indication by Beethoven. Others have suggested a cycle of five quartets, including Opp. 127 and 135. Once introduced, the notion of a cryptocycle proved an irresistible, if controversial, analytical model. Alfred Brendel, for example, believes that Schubert's last three piano sonatas constitute a "trilogy," or "a family of pieces"; in the same essay he argues that the last three Mozart symphonies also form such a trilogy and that the last three Beethoven sonatas are a group of "interdependent" pieces.<sup>29</sup> James Webster raises "the astonishing possibility" that Haydn "composed overarching 'cycles' of two or more complete instrumental works."<sup>30</sup> Richard Kramer even suggests cases in which published groupings of songs sanc-

tioned by Schubert himself violate the cyclic connections that Kramer finds: “It remains an abiding mystery how it is that Schubert time and again came to repudiate the fine, impalpable lines of internal coherence, the matrices of thought and feeling that issue in the fragile gatherings of songs preserved in the autographs.”<sup>31</sup>

These attempts to discover hidden cycles, however, not only have been controversial but also raise questions of a general nature. They can provoke doubts not only concerning specific claims about the unity of any given cryptocycle but also about unity in general: What must unity and compositional identity be if listeners might know the last three Schubert sonatas their whole lives without even suspecting that they “really” form a whole? If we can’t be sure whether these are parts of the same whole, we have to wonder: What is a musical part? What is a whole? How stable is the identity of a piece, how secure are its boundaries, if our beliefs about what belongs to a cycle could be subject to doubt? Why should it require cryptography to establish the identity of a piece?

To consider such questions in detail, I shall examine different analyses of the Chopin Preludes, Op. 28, a particularly challenging case for study of the cryptocycle. Some analysts are convinced—indeed, passionately certain—that the twenty-four preludes in Op. 28 form a unified multimovement suite or cycle; others are equally adamant that they constitute no such thing. The ambiguities begin with Chopin’s score. There are neither a subtitle or any performance indications (such as the word “attacca” after each prelude) to suggest that he envisioned them as an obligatory sequence nor anything to suggest that he did not. Although the pieces were published together and were arranged in a precise order following a double circle of fifths in which each major key is followed by its relative minor (C major, A minor, G major, E minor, and so on), it remains a matter of opinion whether the sequence possesses some “internal” logic or whether it merely reflects the need to fill the twenty-four slots. In a contribution to the debate about the Preludes, Judith Becker, speaking from the perspective of an ethnomusicologist, suggested that the issue involves establishing a “hierarchy of contexts.”<sup>32</sup> I believe, however, that the idea of a hierarchy of contextual levels becomes deeply problematic when the very distinction between text and context is the thing we are trying to establish.

These questions are complicated by the fact that in the reception history of the Preludes, the controversy over cyclic unity has not by any means boiled down to an either/or choice, or even to a both/and decision. If we examine the extensive literature on this topic, there have been not just *two* but at least *four* distinct ways of construing the issue of unity in the Preludes.

### *The Preludes as Monads*

By analyzing individual preludes in isolation, many writers have at least implicitly treated them as autonomous works that can be understood as closed



units, without reference to any other pieces in the set. Heinrich Schenker's analysis of the G Major Prelude in *Free Composition* is a case in point. For Schenker, the piece exhibits a complete form of the fundamental structure with interruption ( $\hat{3} \hat{2} \parallel \hat{3} \hat{2} \hat{1}$ ), reaching complete harmonic and melodic closure.<sup>33</sup> Schenker's view of the A Minor Prelude is perhaps even more revealing. Although the piece does not begin on the tonic and offers only an auxiliary cadence V–I, Schenker uses the piece to illustrate the possibility that works might occasionally deviate from the complete fundamental structure without damaging their autonomy.<sup>34</sup> In much the same way, Schenker regards Brahms's Intermezzo Op. 118, No. 1, which composes out a large III–V–I progression, as a complete piece.<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere in *Free Composition*, Schenker is prepared to concede that there are pieces that are structurally incomplete, and some of these are preludes. Thus he considers the two slow movements in Handel's F Major Keyboard Suite as introductions to the following fast movements, and he regards the whole suite as having two movements, not four.<sup>36</sup> This is because these adagios do not end on their respective tonics. He also raises the question of whether Chopin's Mazurka Op. 30, No. 2, is a fragment, because its key scheme of B minor–F# minor might suggest an incomplete piece in B minor that ends in the wrong key or a piece in F# minor that has a nontonic beginning: "The uncertainty which arises about the tonic . . . almost prevents us from calling this Mazurka a completed composition."<sup>37</sup> Pieces like the A Minor Prelude, however, which end on their tonics, do not trouble him; Schenker seems prepared to grant them autonomous status.

Other writers with a commitment to a wide range of analytical methods also treat individual preludes as closed units. In *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, for example, Leonard Meyer regards the A Minor Prelude as a completed process, involving "the establishment of a process, its continuation, a disturbance, and finally, the re-establishment of the original process." Although he does briefly mention the potential relationship of this prelude to the others that precede and follow it, he does not specify any implications left unrealized that might demand resolution in the next prelude; indeed, the final cadence achieves "complete certainty."<sup>38</sup> In "Pitch-Space Journeys in Two Chopin Preludes," Fred Lerdahl uses the preludes in E major and E minor to illustrate "journeys" in pitch-space.<sup>39</sup> Since each journey has a circular itinerary, returning to its point of origin, the pieces have a satisfying sense of closure. The two preludes are related not to each other or to other preludes in the set but only to abstract models of tonal space.

Constructing the Preludes as autonomous works is by no means limited to works of systematic music theory or technical analysis. In "Two Types of Metaphoric Transference," for example, Marion Guck uses the B Minor Prelude to illustrate the potential of figurative language to illuminate music. She views the piece through the governing metaphor of an arch, using this shape to describe the piece in terms of "rising and falling moods." Although

she admits that the arch “is a plain, even dull image,” it provides a perfect metaphor for a completed, self-contained process.<sup>40</sup>

In constructing the Preludes as objects for analysis, then, these writers treat each prelude as a closed unit; like a turtle that carries its own house on its back, each prelude is sealed off, self-contained, autonomous. Each prelude is a monad.

### *The Preludes as Nomads*

Other writers have quite a different take on the Preludes, seeing them not as *monads* but as *nomads*, as pieces that radically question the idea that the work of art can achieve autonomy by containing and channeling all forces that threaten its unity. In the A Minor Prelude, for example, Rose Rosengard Subotnik believes that “the piece [does] not even project such autonomy as an aesthetic ideal.”<sup>41</sup> Another critic who advocates a similar view of the A Minor Prelude is Lawrence Kramer. Although he elsewhere presents a different view of the Preludes as a set (as we’ll see later), in *Music as Cultural Practice* he treats the A Minor Prelude as an “impossible object,” characterized by radical breaks and discontinuities.<sup>42</sup> His emphasis on extreme contrasts suggests a piece that repels and frustrates any attempt to assimilate it into any sort of whole, and his one brief reference to the position of the piece in the set does not erase this impression.

By relating the Preludes to the tradition of improvised preludes, Jeffrey Kallberg suggests a historical rationale for such challenges to autonomy. Although he also suggests that the Preludes can be considered as concert preludes intended for independent performance, he also connects them to the genre sometimes called the “unattached” prelude, which can function as an introduction to longer pieces. He offers some tantalizing evidence that Chopin may sometimes have used his own preludes for this purpose; it seems likely, for example, that he coupled the F# Minor Prelude with the F# Major Impromptu, Op. 36, at a concert in Glasgow in 1848.<sup>43</sup> Kallberg strongly resists the attempt to combine all twenty-four Preludes into an integral whole, seeing such efforts as anachronistic and misguided: “By asking listeners and performers to accept a transformed genre whereby individual preludes might serve both as introductions to other works and as self-standing pieces, [Chopin] challenged the conservative notion that small forms were artistically suspect or negligible.”<sup>44</sup>

### *The Preludes as Cryptocycle*

A number of analysts, including Józef Chomiński, Richmond Browne, Charles Smith, Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, and Alan Walker, consider the Preludes to be a cyclic work. The proposed basis for so regarding them is usually a recurring motive, although there is disagreement as to what that

motive might be. For Chomiński, a two-note figure (G–A) established in the first prelude runs like a thread through many of the others.<sup>45</sup> For Eigeltinger, however, the unifying motive consists of a rising sixth followed by descending stepwise motion; this motive takes two forms, one melodically open (G–E–D) the other closed (G–E–D–C).<sup>46</sup> In addition to these alleged motivic links, analysts have proposed other sources of unity. One of these involves common-tone connections among successive preludes; many (but not all) of the minor-keyed preludes begin on a pitch that ends the previous major-keyed piece. Thus the melody in the second bar of the A Minor Prelude, for example, begins on the same E with which the soprano voice of the C Major Prelude concludes; the octave b–b<sup>1</sup> that begins the E Minor Prelude is contained in the concluding arpeggio of the G major. No comparable connection, however, seems to join the minor-keyed preludes to their major-keyed successors. Another factor in the search for cyclic unity involves grouping the Preludes into coherent subsets that might suggest rough analogies to a sonatalike design. For these analysts, then, the preludes form a closed, organic whole; the autonomy that others might grant to individual preludes becomes a property of the whole set.

### *The Preludes as an Ironic or Paradoxical Cycle*

The idea of the Preludes as a paradoxical cycle that ironically calls into own unity into question has been advanced by more than one writer. Charles Rosen, for example, suggests that the aesthetic of the fragment developed by Friedrich Schlegel and other romantic writers established a prestigious model that was emulated far beyond literary contexts; by rejecting the polished closure of the classical epigram, the romantic fragment seems paradoxically self-contained yet open, reflecting the outside world. As a cycle of fragments, “the opposing demands of the opus as a whole and of each individual prelude are intended to coexist without being resolved. . . . I think we must accept that the Preludes are conceived only paradoxically as a whole.”<sup>47</sup>

In *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After*, Lawrence Kramer advocates a similar view of the Preludes at greater length. Once the question of unity is posed, “it must be asked again interminably . . . every yes implies a no, and vice-versa. The diverse pieces published together as Opus 28 radically question what it means for various segments to constitute an opus, a work.”<sup>48</sup> On one hand, Kramer rejects the idea of a unifying motive, as well as any attempt to organize the Preludes into coherent subsets, saying that “consistencies that do appear are teasing.”<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, he believes that the impression of disorder is offset by Chopin’s key scheme, and he contrasts Chopin’s “dramatic” arrangement by key with Bach’s “didactic” plan in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Since Bach’s key scheme moves by semitones (C major, C minor, C# major, C# minor, and so on) each new group

effectively obliterates any tonal connection to its predecessor. In Chopin's plan, however, each series of three preludes can be heard as a I–vi–V relationship, and each V is reinterpreted as the tonic in a new I–vi–V progression. By interweaving “one harmonic unit with another” Chopin allows us to hear “no lapse in consistency-building, even though the sense of continuity that results is under constant attack.”<sup>50</sup> In constructing the Preludes as a self-questioning unity, Kramer essentially turns the controversy about the status of the cycle into a property of the piece itself.

Even analysts who do not consistently adhere to one of the preceding possibilities can be seen as negotiating among them. Carl Schachter, for example, discusses the Preludes in G Major, E Minor, and D Major in separate studies, treating them as independent works that exemplify standard Schenkerian paradigms of closure.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, however, he suggests that the three form a satisfying sequence, which might (or might not) be performed together as a group. Thus instead of the grand cycle of twenty-four, we have an (optional) minicycle. Elsewhere, Schachter suggests that the E Minor Prelude and the E Minor Mazurka from the Op. 41 set represent different solutions to the same compositional problem and that the two pieces, which were sketched by Chopin on the same page, might be performed together.<sup>52</sup> This recalls Richard Kramer's idea of “distant cycles,” pieces conceived together but separated by circumstance.

Thus we have four basic possibilities for naming the Preludes, each of which changes their generic status: Are they concert preludes? Unattached preludes? A cycle? An ironic cycle? Does the whole constitute a single work or an anthology? Each naming is also an *unnaming*, in which one rejects other possibilities, and each un-naming changes the relationship between text and context, inside and outside, content and frame, establishing a different hierarchy among the contexts in which the Preludes might be heard. For proponents of the monadic view, the other pieces in the set constitute a level of generic and stylistic context; for holders of the nomadic view, the preludes might join an indefinite number of contexts; for holders of the cyclic view, all twenty-four Preludes constitute a single text and the relevant context might include other cyclic works—song cycles by Schubert and Schumann, for instance. This applies as well to what some might call “extramusical contexts,” although the hierarchical distinction between musical and extramusical contexts also breaks down here. The literary parallels invoked by Rosen, for example, are an essential part of the framing that allows him to constitute the Preludes as a particular kind of piece. Text and context emerge together, then, and interdefine each other.

Nor are these disputes merely academic: they also have practical consequences for listening and performing. Proponents of the cyclic view would presumably advocate performing the Preludes as a complete set, at least under ideal conditions, while those who reject this view might recommend performing them independently, in small groups, or as introductions to

other works. Kallberg addresses this issue explicitly: “Rather than continue to schedule performances of the complete Op. 28 and to construct analytical monuments to its ‘unity,’ we need to perform and study the preludes individually.”<sup>53</sup> Even in performances of the complete set, one might imagine different renditions that would reflect different attitudes to its unity. Pianists who hear the Preludes as a cycle, for example, might revel in the jolts created by the juxtaposition of contrasting moods, regarding them as essential to the aesthetic plan; they might enhance these shocks by plunging directly from the D $\flat$  into the B $\flat$  minor, or from the F major into the D minor. Other pianists might try to cushion these jolts by pausing longer between preludes, regarding the contrasts as nothing more than accidents. For some listeners and performers, the silences, the spaces between the Preludes, are part of the music; for others these spaces simply *do not exist*. Thus “the music itself” changes radically in each construction of the Preludes; the very identity of the music is at stake.

Here we have a perfect instance of what I called the Tower of Babel: four fundamentally different constructions of the Preludes as discursive objects, four groups talking past each other, lacking a common language, and unable even to agree as to whether the Preludes constitute a single work. We could dramatize this dispute through the following argument of four fictional characters.

DR. ZYKLUS: I’m grateful for this opportunity to clarify my position. Once I do so, the cyclic unity of the Preludes will seem self-evident, since my observations derive from facts that are open to inspection by all. Let’s start with the issue of closure. Many of the preludes lack strong closure or seem somehow incomplete. In many cases Chopin ends on a melodically active scale degree, avoiding the stronger feeling of rest that results from ending on  $\hat{1}$ . Thus the preludes in C major, G major, B major, F $\sharp$  major, A $\flat$  major, and D $\flat$  major all end with  $\hat{3}$  in the upper voice, while those in B minor, F minor, and B $\flat$  major end with  $\hat{5}$ . The F major concludes with a seventh chord that adds an E $\flat$  to the tonic harmony. Clearly this pattern of weak closure suggests that Chopin wanted to keep the listener in suspense, to lead into the next prelude in the cycle.

NOMADIA: I agree that closure is often weak. But if we consider the pieces within the tradition of improvised preludes, their weak closure allows them to function as introductions to other pieces. They are radically incomplete; they do not attempt to achieve autonomy, either individually or as a group. By consolidating them into an integrated set, you’re defending against the promiscuity of the preludes, against their potential to couple with any number of other pieces in the same key.

MONADIA: Your interpretations are both skewed. You, Dr. Zyklus, would have us believe that Chopin has yoked together twenty-four of his wildest children, while you, Nomadia, would persuade us that he has left each child to wander like a poor orphan. It is true that Chopin sometimes weakens closure, but this neither deprives the preludes of autonomy nor turns them into a cycle. Just as the concert overture retained aspects of the operatic overture even as it established itself as an independent genre, so the independent prelude retains certain markers of “preludicity”—brevity, an improvisatory quality, and often a certain open-endedness. By feigning incompleteness, each prelude paradoxically becomes complete. Remember, moreover, that in many of his works Chopin ends with a poetically open gesture; look at the Mazurka Op. 17, No. 4, which ends on an F major  $\frac{6}{8}$  chord, even though the piece is in A minor. To follow it with another piece would disturb our aesthetic reverie. Similarly, in the F Major Prelude, the idea is to leave the E $\flat$  floating in the air—but you would puncture this balloon! And what about cases where Chopin does create a strong sense of closure, as he does in the F $\sharp$  Minor Prelude?

DR. ZYKLUS: Aha! You’ve played right into my hands! Of course Chopin fosters closure here! He wants to provide internal resting points within the cycle. Since the F $\sharp$  Minor Prelude is the eighth in the set, it closes off the first third.

MONADIA: You seem to want to have it both ways: if closure is weak, that’s evidence for the cycle; if it’s strong, that’s also evidence for the cycle!

MR. PARADOX: I think I can resolve your disagreements concerning closure. Chopin wants to tantalize us with his paradoxical plan, sometimes connecting a series of preludes, sometimes closing things off. This is all part of the aesthetic intention. The sequence of preludes pushes coherence to the point of chaos, it courts randomness. But it is an orderly chaos, an organized disorder.

MONADIA: On the contrary, the sequence of preludes *seems* chaotic, disordered, and random because it *is* chaotic, disordered, and random, since Chopin intended no such sequence.

NOMADIA: Since we seem to have reached an impasse concerning the significance of closure in the preludes, may I propose another topic for discussion? Let’s consider the performance history of the piece. There is no evidence to suggest that Chopin ever performed the whole set as a continuous sequence. Nor did he encourage his students to do so. This would seem to suggest that the pieces belong to the tradition of the improvised prelude.

DR. ZYKLUS: Of course Chopin could not depend on the fickle Parisian audiences to appreciate the cycle as a whole. His distaste for public performance is well known, and no wonder, considering that in those days it was customary to perform short pieces between the movements of concertos. We must not allow the Philistines of his day to influence our verdict. In constructing a cycle, as in so many other features of his style, Chopin was ahead of his time. He had to compromise, trusting that posterity would decipher his real intent.

MR. PARADOX: Again, I think I can resolve your disagreements. Performers who play individual preludes are responding to the fragmentation that Chopin builds into his self-questioning cycle, while those who perform the whole set recognize its fragile unity.

MONADIA: But could the idea of a cycle be an artefact of modern recording technology? As Jacques Attali has shown, recordings allow people to “stockpile time” by accumulating complete sets.<sup>54</sup> The convenience of recording all twenty-four preludes together, combined with the bourgeois desire for possession, has made us think of the preludes as an obligatory sequence because that’s how we’ve always heard them. Familiarity with the recorded set breeds contempt for the individual piece.

NOMADIA: But we could turn that argument against you as well, Monadia. The possibility of hearing the individual preludes over and over reifies them, makes them seem like self-contained entities.

DR. ZYKLUS: This business of performance history is an interesting sideline, but in the last analysis, any verdict must be based on internal evidence, on the music itself. After we examine the structural relationships in the piece, we’ll be in a better position to evaluate the historical context. Chopin, after all, was not merely a passive witness to history; he also *made* history. Once we look at the piece it becomes clear that a unifying motive runs through it like a thread. As Eigeldinger has demonstrated, a motive of a rising sixth, followed by descending stepwise motion—G–E–D or G–E–D–C—guarantees the organic unity of the cycle.

NOMADIA: At times, however, Eigeldinger seems to fudge his data; as in so many thematicist accounts of musical unity, his standards of what constitutes a motivic transformation are slippery at best. Take the F# Major Prelude as an example. If you asked most listeners to sing the opening of the piece, they’d probably sing a double neighbor-note figure revolving around A#: certainly this is how every pi-



anist plays it. But to find his rising sixth here, Eigeldinger has to claim that it appears as a simultaneous interval, taking the C# from an inner voice along with the melodic A#. Nor is this all: to find the continuation of his motive, he has to ignore both the B and A# at the end of measure 2, while linking the melodic G# in measure 2 to the following inner voice F#. <sup>55</sup> (see ex. 4.5). It would not only be hard to bring such a thing out in performance, but it would distort the melody, at least as most people naively hear it.

DR. ZYKLUS: I am willing to concede that some of Eigeldinger's analyses are more convincing than others. But let's not quibble over details.

NOMADIA: But if the motive does not appear in every prelude, how can you still justify your claims about cyclic unity?

DR. ZYKLUS: I would attribute this to the ancient aesthetic principle of unity and variety, a principle that goes back to the Greeks. If some of the preludes do not display the unifying motive, that simply indicates Chopin's sensitivity to the need for variety.

MONADIA: Again you seem to contradict yourself. When the motive is there, you say it confers unity, but when it's absent, it's a sign of variety!

NOMADIA: Why must you see everything through the Cyclops-eye of your cycle?

DR. ZYKLUS: Why must you deliberately blind yourself to the evidence? It is you who are myopic!

NOMADIA: Am not!

DR. ZYKLUS: Are too!

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Prelude in F# Major, Op. 28, No. 13. The score is in 6/4 time, marked 'Lento'. It features a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a melodic line with a slur over measures 1-4, labeled 'X' above and 'Y retrograde' below. The bass staff has a more complex line with slurs and markings. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is 'Lento'. There are various musical notations including slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'p'.

Example 4.5. Eigeldinger's analysis of Chopin, Prelude in F# Major, Op. 28, No. 13. From "Twenty-Four Preludes Op. 28: Genre, Structure, Significance," in *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 189.



### III

To break the deadlock among these positions, we have to ask what generates the cycle of interpretations, asking what makes different constructions of the music possible; rather than study “the music itself” directly, we have to analyze the analyses through what we might call *second-order analysis*. As a first step here, I will return to Hayden White’s theory of tropes, a model which I briefly introduced in earlier chapters that here demands much closer attention. In normal usage a trope is a linguistic substitution in which one word replaces another, but White inflates the tropes so they become linguistic protocols that potentially shape entire discourses. The four so-called master tropes (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony), used by rhetoricians from Giambattista Vico to Kenneth Burke to represent “the class names of generic categories of figures of speech,” become models for thinking that sanction different ways of constituting facts.<sup>56</sup> One advantage of White’s fourfold tropology is that it avoids dualisms such as the well-known structuralist reduction of all tropes to metaphor and metonymy, while also avoiding the unfortunate tendency, lamented by Gérard Genette among others, to reduce all figurative language to metaphor, which is often seen as a uniquely privileged trope.<sup>57</sup> Although White developed his model (in *Metahistory* and elsewhere) with primary reference to historical discourse, he regards history merely as one domain for investigating tropes; indeed, he has expressed the hope “of grounding the theory of tropes in a general theory of consciousness in which the relations between literal and figurative meaning in a host of fields . . . can be explicated.”<sup>58</sup> Since tropes concern all possible relations between parts and wholes, they seem especially well suited to capture the different modalities of musical analysis, which display all manner of dividing musical objects into parts while also assigning parts to various putative wholes. For my purposes, White’s paradigm seems particularly appealing, because he hopes “to mediate between contending ideologues, each of whom regards his own position as scientific and that of his opponents as mere ideology or ‘false consciousness.’”<sup>59</sup> This precisely describes the situation in which different analysts are convinced that they alone hold the key to the Preludes. In what follows I will define each trope in turn, relating each to a particular way of constructing the Preludes as objects for analysis.

A few precautions are in order. Viewing a discourse in terms of a dominant trope inevitably risks reductionism by relegating other aspects of a text, including the operation of other tropes, to the background. The analyses that follow, therefore, should not be considered exhaustive, nor do they replace other forms of exegesis. As I see it, the primary value of tropology is heuristic, serving as a means for discovery and an aid to invention. Moreover, the texts explicated in this chapter should also be understood through the strategies employed in other chapters, including their formation of dis-

ciplinary identities, their media conditions, and their encoding of social antagonisms. Here the reader must become a coauthor, extending these analyses further while testing and critiquing them. In many respects this book is a lesson in how to read the works of musical research as cultural documents; for such a lesson to be meaningful, it must result in active production.

## *Metaphor*

In its conventional sense, metaphor compares two different things in terms of some shared quality; “My love is a rose,” for example, sets up an equation  $A = B$ , love = rose. In White’s extended sense, metaphor is representational, seeing one thing in terms of another, while each object in the comparison retains its identity; metaphor authorizes the search for similitude between different things. Taking the metaphor “My love is a rose” as an example, White observes that “the loved one is identified with the rose in such a way as to sustain the particularity of the loved one while suggesting the qualities that she (or he) shares with the rose.”<sup>60</sup> The operations of metaphor allow us to see how various writers construct the individual preludes as independent units. Nothing is intrinsically a whole; only by reference to culturally sanctioned models of wholeness or completeness can one constitute something as a whole. In isolating each prelude as a monad, analysts are thinking in the mode of metaphor, searching for similarities not only within each prelude but also between each prelude and various models of structural, narrative, or emotional closure or wholeness.

Here Schachter’s rhetorical strategies in his several studies of the E Minor Prelude offer some instructive examples. (Ex. 4.6 provides the score of this piece.) He uses a variety of metaphorical resemblances to persuade us that the piece is a satisfying whole—a *stylized* fragment rather than something intrinsically incomplete. Most obviously, the piece is constituted as a whole by comparison to the Schenkerian *Ursatz*, or fundamental structure, which functions as a paradigm for completeness since it involves the projection in time of a single tonic triad and reaches both harmonic and melodic closure. The prelude conforms to the fundamental structure in which  $\hat{5}$  is the primary melodic tone; the piece reaches melodic closure ( $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ ) over the bass arpeggiation I–V–I. In all such analyses, the composition and the fundamental structure are never identical; they share a variety of similarities and differences, so they must be compared in terms of shared qualities, metaphorically. Not only will the prolongations of any given piece conceal the underlying structure, but pieces may deviate from the standard forms of the *Ursatz*. In the E Minor Prelude, the piece departs from the basic model in at least three significant respects. First, the initial tone of the fundamental line is not supported by the tonic harmony in root position, but only by I<sup>6</sup>. Second, in its large-scale motion, the upper voice takes a rather peculiar form. In-

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4. *p espressivo*

1. *p*

3. *p*

13. *f* *dim.* *p*

16. *stretto* *f* *dim.* *p*

20. *smorz.* *pp*

Example 4.6. Chopin, Prelude in E Minor, Op. 28, No. 4. From Chopin, *Préludes*, G. Henle No. 73, © 1968 by G. Henle Verlag, Munich; used by permission.

stead of the interruption we might expect in pieces in period form, in which the fundamental line descends to  $\hat{2}$  over the dominant harmony at the end of the first part before resuming the primary tone and moving toward stepwise toward melodic closure in the second ( $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}||\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ ), the upper voice has what Schachter calls a “gapped line” with “a strongly pentatonic character.”<sup>61</sup> In the first phrase, the line traverses only a second from B to A, while the second phrase traces out B–A–F#–E. To reconcile this

with the diatonic model of the *Urlinie*, Schachter must argue that the A of the first half resolves through a register transfer to the bass note G in measure 12. Third, the only way to engineer a descent of the fundamental line is to argue that  $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  appears in an inner voice, so that the fifth of the *Urlinie* is transformed into a twelfth. In assimilating this piece to the fundamental structure as a guarantor of structural wholeness, then, Schachter must argue that the qualities that the piece shares with the *Ursatz* are more significant than any differences: in finding similitude-in-difference, he is thinking in the mode of metaphor.

In addition to these large-scale structural considerations, Schachter employs a number of metaphoric processes to convince us that the piece is not only a whole on the model of the *Ursatz* but also a *unique* whole. After all, one of the major criticisms of Schenkerian analysis is that it reduces all tonal music to a few basic paradigms, since the forms of the fundamental structure are few in number. The standard response to this criticism is to argue that the goal of Schenkerian analysis involves not the process of reduction but establishing the interaction among structural levels, through which the unique qualities of a given piece emerge. In "The Triad as Place and Action" Schachter adds a new twist to this basic strategy. He concedes that "at the most remote levels of structure, it is indeed more or less the same," but he adds that the manner in which a piece traverses its "tonal field," including emphasis on particular chords, their temporal order, pacing, registral placement, and so on, may be highly individualized: "the tonal fields can be almost as particularized as the melodic lines, voice leading, and harmony" (p. 149).<sup>62</sup> Through the metaphor of the tonal field, Schachter generates a variety of submetaphors that allow him to construct the Prelude as a unique whole.

Schachter starts by calling attention to the instability of the opening I<sup>6</sup> harmony and the lack of any root-position tonic triad until the last measure. He concludes that "the part of the tonal field that lies below the [bass note] G is gravitationally charged, as it were, and becomes a presence in the piece even before we hear any of it" (p. 150). The tonal field exerts a gravitational force; it is present even in its absence. This begins to generate a series of related spatial and kinetic metaphors: the bass note G is "pulled in the direction of the appropriate bass sound"; the movement of the bass becomes charged with a kind of physical attraction, so that "the bass is drawn downward"; "the prolonged tonic triad is formed along a steeply descending slope." Subotnik has suggested that the concept of compositional autonomy implies more than wholeness; it also implies a kind of "self-generating structure,"<sup>63</sup> in which a piece unfolds out of its own premises, like a spider spinning its web out of itself. Schachter's kinetic metaphors combine to produce an image of autonomous structure in this sense. The events of the piece do not simply follow one another; they unfold inexorably, since the final root-position tonic was already an absent presence in the first unstable sonority.

## *Metonymy*

In its traditional sense, metonymy signifies a whole through a part. Metonymy is a species of metaphor but one that relies on spatial or temporal contiguity rather than resemblance. In the case of “the White House” as a metonymy for “the president,” for example, the president and the White House are related only by contiguity; the president lives in the White House but does not resemble it. Thinking in the mode of metonymy involves differentiation, classifying things in terms of identity and difference. Metonymy is reductive, reducing a thing to one of its attributes, and dispersive, resulting in part–part relations rather than object–object comparisons.<sup>64</sup>

Viewing the Preludes as nomads turns them into part-objects, parts without a whole or belonging to a whole that remains to be specified. Subotnik’s study of the A Minor Prelude in “Classical Music as Post-Kantian Critique” exemplifies this sort of metonymic thinking.<sup>65</sup> (Ex. 4.7 provides the score of this piece.) I’ll start by juxtaposing a series of disconnected quotations from her essay.

. . . allows one to construe the piece, in a kind of nontemporal, quasi-spatial sense, as an inventory of a few highly individualized aspects of an entity called A minor. (p. 92)

. . . a total musical configuration consisting of an indeterminate number of relatively discreet, though potentially analogous, layers of structural significance that are not grounded in an implicit and unifying tonal premise. (p. 93)

. . . the coexistence of discrete, though in some respects analogous musical parameters that intensify consciousness of the presence of an outside source from which they must emanate. (p. 93)

The piece is a “quasi-spatial . . . inventory” of parts that lie side by side; the “entity” or whole known as A minor is reduced to “a few highly individualized aspects”; the layers are “relatively discrete,” separated in the manner of metonymy, lacking “an implicit and unifying tonal premise” that might make them cohere through metaphorical resemblance; in pointing to “an outside source from which they must emanate,” the musical events are reduced to manifestations of an agent, effects of an external cause, suggesting the act/agent and cause/effect relations associated with metonymy.

This sense of metonymical dispersion pervades the details of her analysis. She regards the final triad, for example, as “a forcible and contingent end” (p. 91) that derives its finality more from rhetorical devices than from any internal harmonic logic. The beginning and end of the piece are connected only by contingency, since “several harmonic disjunctions” (p. 89) intervene between the initial E minor harmony and the final A minor sonority, making any continuous connection between them tenuous. The unify-

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**Lento**

2. *p*

3

6

11

18

*dim.*

*sienlando*

*sostenuto*

Example 4.7. Chopin, Prelude in A Minor, Op. 28, No. 2. From Chopin, *Préludes*, G. Henle No. 73, © 1968 by G. Henle Verlag, Munich; used by permission.

ing and propulsive force of classical tonality based on antecedent and consequent structures yields “to a preoccupation with problems of harmonic identity” (p. 91), causing the harmonic structure to disintegrate into three units (mm. 1–7, mm. 8–12, and mm. 17–23). Not only does the harmonic structure divide into contiguous sections, but the melody becomes “relatively independent” (p. 92), since the harmonic implications of the melody contradict those of the accompaniment.

This idea of a metonymic catalogue of parts extends to the complete set of Preludes as well. The enigmatic qualities of the A Minor Prelude compel

us to look outside it to make sense of it, by relating it to other preludes in Op. 28, or to Chopin's style, or to musical romanticism in general, or larger cultural forces. But the set does not constitute a self-contained whole any more than the A Minor Prelude does: "the entire set of preludes does not bear the same relationship of implication or reciprocity to the individual preludes that seem to connect part and whole in a classical work" (p. 93). Significantly, Subotnik uses the same words to describe the set that she earlier used to characterize the A Minor Prelude: the set is "a nontemporal, quasi-spatial inventory of discrete, analogous components" (p. 94). The sequence of Preludes, then, is ordered as a set of parts related only by contiguity, like the letters in the alphabet.

To get a sense of how radically this sort of thinking challenges constructions of the Preludes as monads, I will compare Subotnik's discussion of the E Minor Prelude to Schachter's. We have already seen how Schachter, who regards the piece as a stylized fragment, assimilates it to models of closure and a kind of self-generating structure. The two halves of the piece are related by multiple similarities-in-difference (the resemblance of the bass lines, etc.). For Subotnik, however, the two sections are related only by an "arbitrary decision to repeat the first section in order to get beyond its fragmentary condition."<sup>66</sup> She is well aware, of course, of the resemblances between these sections, but she wants us to look beyond the obvious similarities, which blind us to the contingency of the event; the freshness of her perception here lies in asking us to imagine that *anything* might have happened at this point in the piece. While Schachter regards the chromatic chords as contrapuntal, and thus as directed toward a goal, Subotnik considers them "coloristic," so that they direct attention to themselves, to the present moment, especially through their repetition.<sup>67</sup> Where Schachter seeks to demonstrate the inevitability of the music in the manner through which the second part compresses and then slows down in a "composed *allargando*" that is the mimesis of an emotional process, Subotnik sees this intensification as "externally imposed"—as the result of rhetorical and dramatic devices, thus as a way of "wresting sense from the intrinsically fragmentary."<sup>68</sup>

Interestingly enough, their depictions of the expressive import of the prelude are not all that different. For Schachter, the piece is about death, "perhaps the imagination of one's own death."<sup>69</sup> For Subotnik, the prelude conveys a sensibility that recognizes "the tragic implications for humanity of a world vision in which the real is not the eternal but the transient."<sup>70</sup> Here Chopin's music becomes a kind of *memento mori*, reminding us of the evanescence and fragility of the present moment and of our ultimate fate, even as it concentrates attention on the present as all we have. There is a moral dimension, then, to their discourse: hearing the E Minor Prelude after reading Subotnik and Schachter might teach us a kind of tragic resignation. But their aesthetic reactions to the human condition are radically different. Schachter seems to share Schenker's belief that "art alone



bestows . . . fulfillment”;<sup>71</sup> art provides consolation for life’s tragic bleakness by providing images of the wholeness and completion we can’t have in reality. For Subotnik, on the other hand, art is as intrinsically fragmentary as life. Their predilection for different tropes, then, may reflect different attitudes toward life; studying them in terms of tropes allows us not only to open lines of communication between them but also to clarify their values.

Metonymy also allows us to clarify Lawrence Kramer’s interpretation of the cultural meanings of the A Minor Prelude in *Music as Cultural Practice*.<sup>72</sup> Kramer views the piece as an “impossible object,” a term he invents to describe “bodies or body-substitutes” that serve as “self-images” or “erotic ideals.” Such objects are responses to a cultural situation in which “human subjectivity ceases to be a common field” (p. 88). When the self is “no longer a shared sameness” but “an essential difference” (p. 88), then metonymic differentiation replaces the metaphoric similitude between one self and another. By portraying the prelude as an image for such a self, Kramer constructs it in the mode of metonymy.

Here the texture of Kramer’s prose merits careful scrutiny, because his style echoes, in a manner that seems quite deliberate, the discontinuities that he finds in the piece. He imitates the fragmented quality that he attributes to the piece through a kind of extended metaphor; his writing metaphorically resembles the discontinuities of metonymy. The title of his chapter, “Impossible Objects: Apparitions, Reclining Nudes, and Chopin’s Prelude in A Minor,” already prefigures metonymic drift; he establishes a series related only by contiguity, in which there is no intrinsic connection among the elements. (What do apparitions have in common with nudes, and what, aside from the rhyme, do nudes have to do with preludes?) More prosaic titles, such as “Disintegration in Chopin’s A Minor Prelude,” or “Chopin’s A Minor Prelude as an Impossible Object” would not foreshadow the content of the chapter.

This mimesis of metonymy continues in the manner in which he fragments his discussion of the prelude. No sooner does he introduce the piece, for example, than he inserts a long digression (about two pages) concerning Keats and Coleridge, leaving the piece dangling. Later, he again leaves Chopin in the lurch to discuss, among other things, Kafka’s parable “The Crossbreed,” and Théodore Géricault’s grisly *Study of Dissected Limbs*. The self-consciousness of Kramer’s textual strategy becomes evident when he suggests that measures 11–14 of the prelude constitute a “disruptive interlude” in which “the melody freezes and the harmony stops making sense” (p. 93). By punctuating his prose with similar disruptive interludes, he mimics the piece’s fragmentation.

The painting by Géricault, which is reproduced in the text, provides a stunning image for this fragmentation. The severed arm “gives an uncanny impression of embracing, caressing the legs,” so that “the erotic value normally thought proper to the body as a whole—especially to the painted figure—is displaced onto the body in pieces, so that whole and part, and



even self and other, become arbitrary distinctions" (p. 89). If whole and part are arbitrary distinctions, then the painting, and by extension the prelude, reduce experience to a succession of part-objects.

Both metaphor and metonymy are at work in any construction of discursive objects, but they operate in different ways. Those who regard the individual preludes as monads, for example, see the relation of the individual preludes to the set in the manner of metonymy; the parts do not add up to a whole but only form an aggregate. In differentiating metaphoric from metonymic construction of the Preludes, we are also thinking in the mode of metonymy.

### *Synecdoche*

Like metonymy, with which it is often confused, synecdoche involves relationships between part and whole. But whereas metonymy is dispersive, *reducing* a whole to one of its parts, synecdoche is integrative, in that part and whole are related as microcosm and macrocosm. The parts and whole share a common essence, so that synecdoche involves "an *integration* within a whole that is *qualitatively* different from the sum of its parts."<sup>73</sup> In the synecdoche "he is all heart," for example, the part participates in the whole, with which it shares a common essence; the attributes metaphorically associated with the heart—warmth, generosity, goodness—suffuse the person's whole being. While there is a potential similarity here with the whole/whole identifications involved in metaphor, synecdoche implies not the "holistic Organicism" of metaphorical identifications "but that of the part-whole relationship which permits the observer to see in the microcosm an intimation of the larger coherence contained in the totality."<sup>74</sup>

Constructions of the preludes as a cycle rely on synecdoche as a master trope; the parts (the individual preludes) and the whole (the cycle) share a common essence, so that they are related as microcosm and macrocosm. But the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm in these analyses can also be extended, so that the cycle itself can be seen as a microcosm for a larger whole. From one perspective the whole set of Preludes is the macrocosm in which the individual preludes participate; from another perspective, the cycle itself is a microcosm that represents a still larger whole, such as the universe of Chopin's style or even the sonic universe itself. To Eigeldinger, for example, "the Preludes offer a clue as to the associations keys held for Chopin. . . . If they are a *microcosm* in this respect, they are too for several of his pianistic textures and compositional types" (pp. 184–85).<sup>75</sup> Eigeldinger lists a series of genres that are represented in the set, including study, nocturne, mazurka, impromptu, march, *moto perpetuo all'unisono*, recitative in fantasia style, as well as "two elegies, two arabesques, and at least one prelude" (p. 185).

The extent to which thinking in the mode of synecdoche governs Eigeldinger's account becomes evident if we look more closely at his deriva-

tion of the *Urmotiv* of the Preludes—the rising sixth and stepwise descent (G–E–D and G–E–D–C). He contends that the ascent from the fifth of the triad to its third derives from the principles of equal temperament, in which one tunes the fifth and then the third above a fundamental: “The shape of this melodic cell is generated by the dictates of the *temperament* of Chopin’s piano” (p. 182). The motive, then, resembles the chord of nature that opens Wagner’s *Das Rheingold*, in which the tonic is sounded, followed by the fifth, and then by an arpeggiation that ends on the third of the tonic triad. In this way the Preludes emerge from the nature of sound itself.

In the final analysis, what governs op. 28 and makes it a *cycle* is the logic of its temperament, which gives pride of place to thirds. From this point of view the Twenty-four Preludes constitute a confirming response to Bach. Where Chopin differs from Bach, who was moved by didactic considerations to arrange his preludes and fugues in isolated pairs, was in grasping straight away the tonal space opened up by his “tempered piano.” (p. 184)

In thinking in the mode of synecdoche, it becomes possible to glimpse intimations of ever larger wholes. This is perhaps why cyclic explanations of groups of works—what I have called cryptocycles—can tend to take in more and more music, to digest everything. If one has discovered the key, cracked the code, then all of music can verge on becoming a single piece, recalling Shelley’s statement that all poetry is the ruins of a single lost epic poem.

To see how the principle of the cryptocycle can overflow even the boundaries of a single composer’s oeuvre, let us compare Eigeldinger’s analysis with Rudolph Réti’s discussion of Schumann’s *Kinderszenen*. Réti argues that this piece lies midway between a suite and a set of variations; the motive announced at the start of the first piece (“Von fremden Ländern und Menschen”) appears throughout the set, sometimes at the original pitch level, sometimes transposed (see ex. 4.8).<sup>76</sup> Not only does this motive itself strongly resemble the “*omnipresent motivic cell*” (p. 181, emphasis in original) that Eigeldinger finds in the Preludes—both consist of an ascending sixth leap followed by a stepwise descent—but also the sort of transformations Réti finds are strikingly similar to those in Eigeldinger. Could Eigeldinger’s analysis be an unconscious reminiscence of Réti’s? Have we uncovered a hidden cycle of cyclic analyses? Certainly the resemblances are



Example 4.8. Schumann, *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15, No. 1 (“Von fremden Ländern und Menschen”), opening motive.



Example 4.9. Réti's analysis of Schumann, Op. 15, No. 3, showing the hidden presence of the basic motive of the cycle, consisting of a rising sixth followed by a stepwise descent. From Rudolph Réti, *The Thematic Process in Music* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 39.

uncanny. Compare, for instance, example 4.9, which shows Réti's analysis of the third piece in *Kinderszenen*, with example 4.10, which shows Eigeldinger's analysis of Prelude No. 15; in both cases a similar melodic shape is extracted from a complex melodic line. This potential to assimilate more and more music can undermine the aims of analysts themselves. Eigeldinger wants to uncover Chopin's unique, innermost essence, to find that which is in Chopin more than Chopin (to use a Lacanian formula), but what he finds when he lifts the veil is a motive from Schumann.

### *Irony*

In its traditional sense, irony is contrastive, saying one thing and meaning another, so that what is affirmed on the literal level is negated on the figurative. White extends this traditional usage to indicate a questioning of language itself, and an awareness of the possibility of multiple linguistic descriptions of any phenomenon.<sup>77</sup> Since the tropes I have explored thus far—metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche—presuppose the capacity of language “to grasp the nature of things in figurative terms,” White regards

**Sostenuto** Y

Example 4.10. Eigeldinger's analysis of Chopin, Prelude in D<sup>b</sup> major, Op. 28, No. 15, showing the hidden presence of the basic motive of the cycle, consisting of a rising sixth followed by a stepwise descent. From “Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 28: Genre, Structure, Significance,” in *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 190.

them as “naive.”<sup>78</sup> In contrast, irony is the “sentimental” or self-conscious trope because it casts doubt on the adequacy of all language.

Kramer’s approach to the complete set of Preludes in *Music and Poetry*—an analysis that differs significantly from his later study of the A Minor Prelude in *Music as Cultural Practice*—exemplifies irony in this extended sense. His arrival at an ironic stance results from trying to juggle conflicting conceptions of the Preludes that alternate between metonymic dispersion and synecdochic integration. He believes that the sequence of preludes “sounds like an exaltation of juxtaposition, of parataxis, of random association”<sup>79</sup> and thus can be construed in the mode of metonymy. Yet he is also convinced that there are microcosm/macrocosm relations that work against this sort of inventory of parts. The “dramatic” harmonic plan of the Preludes (already discussed) is prepared within many of the individual preludes through an emphasis on the submediant toward the end of the major-keyed pieces, setting up the key of the next prelude. In this way “Chopin turns the cycle as a whole into a macrocosmic image that heightens the latent continuity among its seemingly dissociate pieces” (p. 102). Thus Kramer’s construction of the Preludes as an ironic cycle resembles the process that White finds in Alexis de Toqueville’s account of the French Revolution. Toqueville’s efforts to shuttle between metonymic and synecdochic explanations finally led him to an “ironic recognition that any linguistic protocol will obscure as much as it reveals about the reality it seeks to capture in the order of words.”<sup>80</sup> My tropological explanation of the ways of constructing the Preludes is itself ironic, since “irony [is] the trope of tropology.”<sup>81</sup> Multiple figurative descriptions of the Preludes are possible, none of them inherently true or false.

Kramer’s chief rhetorical figure is catachresis. Catachresis (literally “abuse”) involves applying the “wrong” name to something without a “proper” name, as when one refers to the “foot” of a mountain or the “elbow” of a pipe; catachresis can also produce an intentionally absurd expression such as Milton’s “blind mouths.” As White demonstrates, Milton’s figure is ironic because it plays on “the contrast between eyes (to which the adjective *blind* might be conventionally applied) and mouths (which are not normally thought of as being blind).”<sup>82</sup> In trying to capture the paradoxical quality he attributes to the Preludes, Kramer is often driven to invent catachreses, combining terms from different musical domains that create “improper” names, even at the risk of apparent absurdity. This tendency emerges, for example, during his discussion of Chopin’s tendency to invest nonharmonic elements—including particular registers, dynamic levels, rhythmic units, and indeed “potentially anything at all”—with “quasi-harmonic significance” (p. 109). When qualities such as consonance and dissonance traditionally associated with harmony are applied to these other domains, opportunities for catachresis proliferate. Kramer’s discussion of rhythm provides several examples. He argues that since a consistent rhythmic pattern tends to dominate each prelude, such patterns can acquire the

status of a “rhythmic tonic,” while their disruption creates a sense of “rhythmic dissonance” (p. 112). The expressions “rhythmic tonic” and “rhythmic dissonance” are catachreses; their power to surprise us comes from their coupling the adjective “rhythmic” with nouns associated with harmony.

In the D $\flat$  Prelude, the famous repeated A $\flat$  (later G $\sharp$ ) that saturates the piece becomes a kind of tonic: “the basis of the tension, structure, and closure in this music is the pedal tone in its registral position” (p. 116). The disruption of the A $\flat$  through its placement in a different register or its temporary replacement by another pitch create “textural zones” analogous to modulations. In this process, even the tonic triad can become paradoxically dissonant. In the F Minor Prelude, silence assumes the role of a harmonic substitute: “the silences take on the value of unresolvable dissonances,” producing the paradox of an “anti-music” (p. 110). Again, expressions such as “tonic register,” “textural modulation,” and “dissonant silence”—which are implied, although not explicitly written, in Kramer’s text—are all catachreses. Their boldness lies in their power to defamiliarize conventional musical concepts, much the way Milton’s “blind mouths” compels us, as White puts it,

to widen our appreciation of the force of *both* the adjective and the noun as signs and, at the same time, to bring under question implicitly the rule of usage which had formerly constrained us to use *blind* primarily with *eyes*, and *mouths* primarily with adjectives such as *loud*, *silent*, *open*, *closed*, and so on.<sup>83</sup>

By asking us to associate silence not with emptiness but with dissonance, Kramer compels us to reflect on the adequacy of our own categories. In the process, the traditional hierarchy among musical parameters, in which harmony usually dominates as a structural determinant, undergoes an ironic inversion in which “Chopin throws his musical language itself into question” (p. 107). But our willingness to believe in Chopin’s interrogation of musical language is brought about by Kramer’s ironic questioning of his own verbal language and of the conventional usages bequeathed to him in prior discourse about music.

To summarize my second-order analysis in graphic terms, I have adopted a device from Hans Kellner, whose work includes some inspired riffs on White’s tropology (see fig. 4.2). Kellner represents the tropes through a diagram with four quadrants, arranging them along vertical axes that show the type of part/whole relations involved in each case and along horizontal axes labeled “dispersive/integrative” and “constitutive/regulative.”<sup>84</sup> Metaphor and irony, for example, both compare two wholes, but metaphor compares them in positive terms ( $A = B$ ), while irony is negational ( $A \neq A$ ). Metonymy and synecdoche both involve part/whole relations, but the first is dispersive while the second is integrative. In my version of Kellner’s chart, I

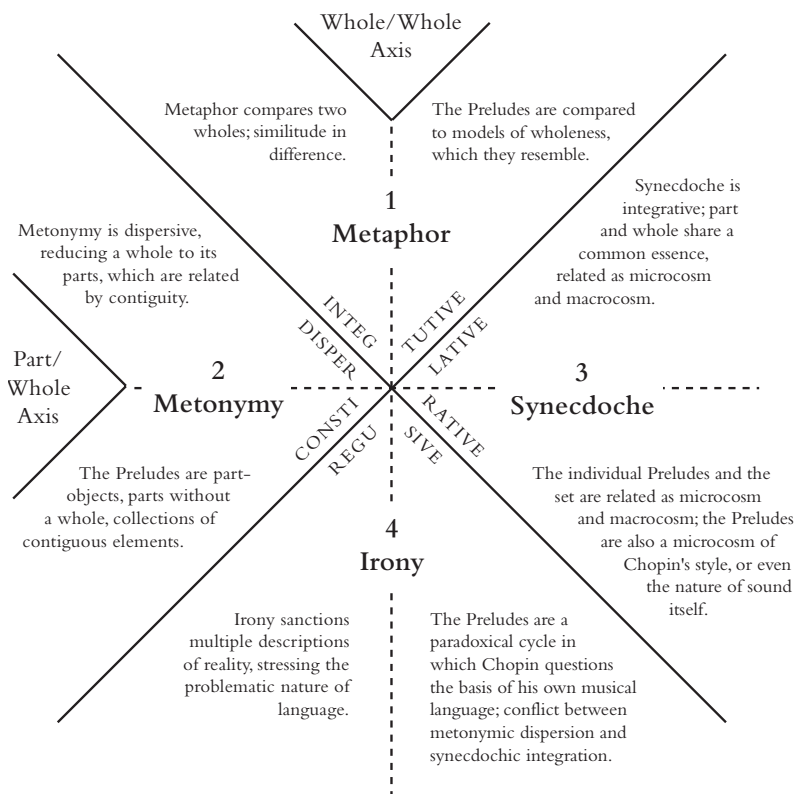


Figure 4.2. Second-order analysis: four ways of constructing the Chopin Preludes as discursive objects (schema of the four tropes after Hans Kellner).

have added glosses by each trope to help readers for whom these terms may be unfamiliar keep them straight; I've also matched each trope to a particular construction of the preludes as an object for analysis. The reader can take in my analysis at a glance, while drawing further inferences about how different takes on the preludes might have overlapping similarities and differences.

Here I have confined my tropological reading to explaining the preliminary characterization of the Preludes in terms of monads or nomads and cycle or paradoxical cycle. In the future one might wish to make finer distinctions within each category, using combinations of tropes to explain subtler differences between analyses. The second-order analysis already presented, however, should suffice to indicate the mutability of the Preludes as musical objects; since their identity as a collection of signifiers is only relative, they must be constructed anew in each hearing, in each performance, in each analysis.

## 5

### THE OBJECTS OF MUSICAL RESEARCH (2)

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#### I

Having approached the disciplinary objects of musical research from the side of the individual composition, here I shall start from the side of context. This movement from two directions, however, is meant to question rather than to celebrate the text/context divide, by suggesting a certain Moebius-strip logic through which inside and outside, content and frame, mutually determine each other. Indeed, my discussion of different constructions of the Chopin Preludes has already shown how variable the boundaries of a composition can be, how decisions about compositional identity depend on acts of discursive framing. Both text and context are constructed rather than given, and depend, as a condition of possibility, on the conceptual models that are available in a given culture.

These models depend to a large extent on rhetoric. Although rhetoric, as the art of persuasion, is often dismissed as sophistry, as language intended to seduce, or as merely ornamental language, such characterizations are misleading. In their magisterial treatment of the topic, Chaim Perelman and Lydia Olbrechts-Tyteca show that rhetoric is a valid mode of argumentation that applies to cases where logical deductions do not. In contrast to logic, which aims at compulsion, rhetoric deals with “the plausible” or “the probable” and aims to produce adherence or conviction.<sup>1</sup> Brian Vickers compares Cartesian logic to a digital computer, which has only two options, yes or no, while rhetorical argumentation is like an analog computer, which lacks a yes/no option and instead has degrees of more or less.<sup>2</sup>

Works such as Hayden White’s *Metahistory*, Donald McCloskey’s *Rhetoric of Economics*, and Sande Cohen’s *Historical Culture* have shown the extent to which rhetoric operates in the human sciences.<sup>3</sup> This is because their disciplinary objects often involve the past or the future, which can be known only in terms of probability. Only a blockhead, for example, would deny that

the French Revolution happened. But what caused it? What were its effects? As White points out, “the historical record is both too full and too sparse,”<sup>4</sup> so the historian must organize and interpret the data into the most probable scenario, creating continuity through a narrative rhetoric, employing devices such as emplotment, which we usually associate with imaginative literature. White has often been accused of relativism, but his critics misunderstand the function of rhetoric in historical argumentation. White does not deny that we can know “what really happened”; what matters in history, however, is the *meaning* of events, and events have no intrinsic meaning. There can be no logical deductions here, no proofs that will compel assent: the historian must persuade. Or consider a question from another field. How should the United States respond to the events of September 11, 2001? Since the future is unknown, political theorists must argue on the basis of the probable. But this does not mean that all such arguments are equally valid. Even in the so-called hard sciences, Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar have made a strong case that rhetoric operates in the construction of scientific facts. Here persuasion consists in erasing its own traces, so that “all sources of persuasion seem to have disappeared.”<sup>5</sup>

In music we constantly confront the uncertainties of the past and future. We cannot, for example, directly observe the transmission of Gregorian chant. Thus Peter Jeffery tries to persuade us that the process of chant transmission resembles that in modern, non-Western cultures in which the primary means of transmission is oral.<sup>6</sup> His work involves a process of persuasion, of rhetoric, attempting to convince us that this is the most plausible hypothesis. Even in the study of modern cultures where one might actually observe oral transmission, the sources of potential data are infinite; one must argue for what is typical, organizing the data into the most persuasive patterns. Such arguments involve the future as well, because one is trying to persuade an audience that adopting the method in question will enable them to realize their desire for knowledge and insight.

In itself, then, rhetoric is not illegitimate. It can become problematic, however, when it denies its own status as rhetoric and its own will to persuade—when it is used to conceal its nature as a construction. That is why White recommends undertaking “a *rhetorical analysis* . . . to disclose the poetical understructure of what is meant to pass for a modest prose representation of reality.”<sup>7</sup> In a sense, this whole book does this, but here I want to focus specifically on historical context as a rhetorical construction.

## II

My first case study involves Jacques Attali’s *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*,<sup>8</sup> a book I choose both for the ambitious scope of its explanatory strategies and for its influence on recent American musicology (an influence some may dispute). Attali believes not only that music and society are



interimplicated but that music can be prophetic, heralding developments that a social formation may later experience. He wants to provide a global explanation of the transactions between music and society, a history that not only subsumes the past but even forecasts the future; he ranges from the holy hush of ancient sacrifice in ritual music to brooding over the unhatched egg of the future—all in less than 150 pages! This vision of history as a unified and intelligible process recalls the works of the great philosophical historians described by Hayden White in *Metahistory* and elsewhere. What Attali shares with them above all is a predilection for explanatory models that unfold in four stages, whether these stages represent a series of historical eras or a sequence of four modes of historical interpretation. Thus in Hegel history has four stages: Oriental, Greek, Roman, and Germanic; and there are four types of reflective history (universal, pragmatic, critical, and conceptual).<sup>9</sup> Attali's four stages, which I will describe shortly, are called sacrifice, representation, repetition, and composition. These represent both four types of distribution networks for music and four types of social organization. Although these can interpenetrate each other and coexist, Attali nevertheless feels that "it still seems possible to determine a certain economic logic of succession" (p. 41).

### *Sacrifice*

For Attali, the original function of music was "to make people *forget*" (p. 19) the violent origins of society. Here Attali draws on René Girard's influential thesis about the primitive fear of violence as a contagious disease, as a plague that will spread uncontrollably unless it is channelled into ritual forms.<sup>10</sup> The noise encountered in music is "a simulacrum of murder. . . . *In the space of noise, it symbolically signifies the channelling of violence and the imaginary*" (p. 25, emphasis in original). At this earliest stage of music and society, music was not yet distinct from religion; the shaman combined music and magic. For that matter, music was not yet separated from the body, since the jongleurs combined acrobatics and music: the jongleur "was music and the spectacle of the body" (p. 14). In terms of tropes, this undifferentiated state involves the metaphoric identification of different things. Here an archetypal plot begins to emerge: *Noise* begins in a state of innocence, an originary state prior to differentiation. From one perspective, of course, music is not innocent at all, since it conceals violence; here innocence means freedom from exchange, from money.

### *Representation*

In the second network, representation, music becomes commercialized: "people began to listen to it in silence and exchange it for money" (p. 26). The plot begins to develop: the original state of purity is followed by a decline, a fall from innocence. The metaphoric apprehension of the world is

destroyed as music is deritualized, becoming a commodity in a spectacle staged for public representation and acquiring an exchange value. This did not happen instantly, since feudalism did not disappear all at once: “the rupture . . . was neither sudden nor total” (p. 17). In contrast to the metaphoric fusion of ritual, the governing trope in this new stage is metonymy, the trope of differentiation and reductive part–part relations. The fall into commodification introduced a division of labor not found previously: the roles of composer and performer were increasingly differentiated; the audience and musicians were separated, not only through the introduction of distinct performance spaces but also through the star system; the body was exiled from music, since “acrobatics was confined to the circus” (p. 72). Harmony also figures in this metonymic process, since harmony implies the production of differences: “harmony lives by differences alone. . . . Difference is the principle of order” (p. 62). Metonymy operates above all in the fundamental principle of the network of representation, since “one element [represents] all the others” (p. 57), and that element is money (p. 58). In this reduction of music to money, the whole is reduced to a part that is related by contiguity, not by metaphoric resemblance.

### *Repetition*

The third network, repetition, is made possible by recording technology, which has fundamentally altered our relation to music. Here music heralds the repetitive society, the society of mass production and uniformity. Through the Sisyphean tedium of manufactured music, all consumers become identical: “one consumes in order to resemble, and no longer, as in representation, to distinguish oneself” (p. 110). In terms of tropes, the identification of all consumers with each other involves synecdoche: the parts and whole are qualitatively identical. In terms of emplotment, this stage marks a further decline from its predecessor; the listener becomes a servant of machines, a sound engineer (p. 106); the desire to “stockpile time” by accumulating recordings for future consumption—recordings one may never have time to hear—alienates us from music. We become passive spectators, silenced by commodities: “A certain usage of the transistor radio silences those who know how to sing; the record bought and/or listened to anesthetizes a part of the body; people stockpile the spectacle of abstract and too often ridiculous minstrels” (p. 110).

### *Composition*

The fourth and final network, composition, is just emerging now, offering a glimpse of utopia—a revolution in social relations prefigured in music and involving “a reconciliation between work and play” (p. 141). Here Attali seems to envision a benign anarchy, a democratization of creativity that will transcend both representation and repetition: “a music produced by

each individual for himself, for pleasure outside of meaning, usage, and exchange" (p. 137). In escaping the cycle of exchange, music comes full circle and rejoins its origins, so that we see "the reappearance of very ancient modes of production" (p. 140) as well as the return of the body. Now the trajectory of the plot is complete: we have gone from a state of original purity in which music is untainted by commerce (sacrifice) through a fall into commodification (representation) through a further alienation from music in mass consumption (repetition) to a recovered wholeness in which music exists for its own pleasure (composition).

This narrative shape recalls the archetypal plot, already mentioned in chapter 3, that M. H. Abrams calls "unity lost and regained," a pattern rooted in the Christian view of history as beginning and ending in a state of grace, with a fall into sin in the middle.<sup>11</sup> In seeking to adapt this sacred narrative to the needs of a secular age, various romantic writers transformed the idea "of the lost and future paradise" into "the form of unity, unity lost, unity-to-be-regained."<sup>12</sup> Attali's portrayal of the network of sacrifice as a state of harmony (between music and the body, between music and religion, and so on) corresponds to the stage in romantic narratives that imagines some primal state of oneness (whether between individual and society, humanity and nature, or whatever); Attali's portrayal of representation as a fall into differentiation corresponds to the moment in romantic narratives where unity is fractured, producing various dualities between "ego and non-ego, subject and object, spirit and other, nature and mind."<sup>13</sup> Thus a certain covert romanticism haunts Attali's history, despite the fact that he locates the network of representation, and thus the onset of decline, during the historical era associated with romanticism. In this respect his work shares that persistence of romantic ideology that many critics find in twentieth-century modernism, and even in authors such as T. S. Eliot who explicitly repudiate romantic values.

Attali's romantic tendencies are especially evident in his belief that the utopian potential of the final network of composition lies in its complex relation to the network of sacrifice; it does not merely recapitulate sacrifice but restores it on a higher level. As Abrams points out, the romantic recovery of unity is not merely circular; although we are alienated from our origins, we cannot simply regress to a naive state. Instead, the return is experienced with enhanced self-consciousness, so that the process resembles a spiral, fusing "the circular return with the idea of linear progress."<sup>14</sup> This image of a spiral illuminates Attali's project and reconciles the seemingly contradictory impulses of his argument, his insistence that while the four networks display "a certain economic logic of succession," music nevertheless "does not evolve in a linear fashion, but is caught up in the complexity and circularity of history." (In fig. 5.1 I have represented Attali's narrative in the form of a spiral in which the final stage, composition, rejoins the original stage on a higher level; thus my diagram must be interpreted in three

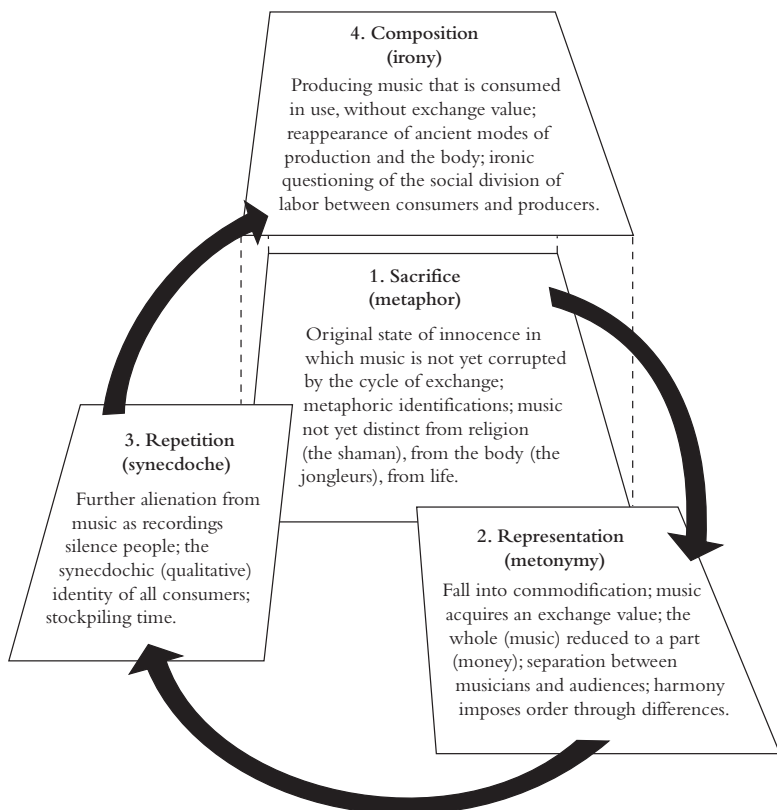


Figure 5.1. Jacques Attali's historical narrative (the four networks arranged in a spiral to suggest linear progress fused with a circular return).

dimensions.) Thus composition recovers origins in an ironic mode, not as a simple or naive return: "Make no mistake. This is not a return to ritual. Nor to spectacle" (p. 134). Instead, we have an ironic subversion of the social division of labor introduced in the two previous networks: "Composition calls into question the distinction between workers and consumers" (p. 135). It is not a state prior to differentiation but one that self-consciously interrogates the barriers that have developed between composer and audience.

Electronic media, which made the network of repetition possible, are playing a vital role in the emergence of the new network, through a more inventive and subversive use. Attali finds reason for optimism, for example, in the phenomenon of *Music Minus One*, which allows "one to insinuate oneself into production" (p. 141). He also believes that we are entering a fertile period for "the production and invention of new instruments" (p. 144), which will release individuals from the constraints of composing for pre-existing instruments. He sees this as heralding "a new mutation in technology" (p. 144). This belief that technology will help to realize human

freedom suggests another romantic strain in his work, since both technoutopias and technodystopias, as Richard Coyne remarks, have romantic origins.<sup>15</sup> Here Attali's affinity with Marshall McLuhan, whose prestige in France reached its zenith around the time that *Noise* appeared in 1977, seems striking.<sup>16</sup> Attali seems to share McLuhan's faith that electronic media will produce a retribalization; in contrast to the primacy of the visual in print culture, electronic media will recapture the primacy of aurality, producing a global village.

Now some key questions can be posed: Is the vision of the future presented in *Noise* desirable? Can we identify with Attali's utopia as a cultural ideal, regardless of whether we find his prognostications empirically accurate? It seems to me that the people who populate Attali's future resemble Richard Rorty's "liberal ironists."<sup>17</sup> In Rorty's writings, such ironists, who are modeled on the romantic ideal of the artist, aspire to radical individuality, to achieving a radical freedom and autonomy. But as Nancy Fraser has observed, Rorty must "split the difference between Romanticism and pragmatism along a divide between private and public life," since there seems to be no connection between these self-realized individuals and any possible community.<sup>18</sup> Attali seems to embrace a similar division between public and private spheres when he stresses that the composition network will depend on "*tolerance and autonomy*" (p. 145, emphasis in original); he seems to imagine a world of autonomous individuals who are tolerant of each other but otherwise disconnected. This aesthetic self-absorption becomes clear when he discusses the future of video technology, which he believes will become central in the emerging network: "But the essential usage of the image recorder seems to me to be elsewhere, in its private use for the manufacture of one's own gaze upon the world, and first and foremost upon oneself. Pleasure tied to the self-directed gaze. Narcissus after Echo" (p. 144). This reference to Greek mythology may echo McLuhan, who argued that Narcissus was in love not with himself but "with a technological extension of himself" and that electronic media may permit one to have the contact with one's own image—to manipulate and change it—that was denied to Narcissus.<sup>19</sup> Is this narcissism really a utopia?

### III

If my study of Attali has been convincing, readers may wonder to what extent this results from the self-consciously schematic quality of his thought; his work fits almost too easily into a variety of conceptual patterns, and figure 5.1 may strike some as encapsulating his latent structuralism even as they question how far such an analysis may have wider application. As a counterpoint to Attali, therefore, I will consider Susan McClary's 1991 book *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*,<sup>20</sup> a book that differs markedly from *Noise* in terms of style and organization yet displays, as I'll argue

later, a similar narrative of unity lost and regained. Reactions to this book have tended to be strongly polarized, divided between love and hatred, wild enthusiasm and bitter rejection. Reading McClary intertextually, with an awareness of the range of cultural models her work invokes, may foster more nuanced responses to her achievement, particularly by acknowledging the unresolved tensions produced by her attempt to find a voice for women while using narrative patterns that may already be compromised by the history in which they are embedded. McClary herself is keenly aware of these difficulties, as when she remarks that “even though women have managed to enter into composition as professionals, they still face the problem of how to participate without unwittingly reproducing the ideologies that inform various levels of their discourses” (p. 19). When the forms of subjectivity have historically been occupied by men, finding ways to assert feminine identity becomes problematic.

Although the essays collected in *Feminine Endings* were obviously composed over a long period of time and do not exhibit a systematic progression, a careful reading reveals, nevertheless, a four-part historical scheme that confers a loose continuity on the whole text. In the following excerpt, McClary’s notion of a “general crisis” suggests a moment of rupture that separates an original state of innocence from a subsequent fall from grace:

Before the general crisis of the late sixteenth century, European culture was shaped by ideals of harmony, balance, stability. . . . With the general crisis of the seventeenth century [*sic*—a moment ago it was the late sixteenth century] precipitated by—among many other factors—the Reformation, colonial expansion, humanism, the scientific revolutions of Copernicus and Galileo, and Cartesian philosophy, the ideal of culture changes from stability and balance to extravagant, individualistic assertion. The musical principles responsible for images of Renaissance *harmonia* are defiantly ruptured, and a new secular spirit of passionate manipulation emerges. The theatrical genres of opera, cantata, and oratorio immediately move to the center of vocal composition; the virtuosic solo violin sonata leads to the creation of specifically instrumental forms that dispense with verbal discourse altogether and that work purely on the basis of aggressive rhetorical gestures; goal-oriented tonality develops to provide the illusion of narrative necessity that underlies the new music of the modern era. (pp. 119–20)

Since McClary wrote the afterword to the 1985 English translation of *Noise*, it is tempting to attribute this narrative structure to Attali’s influence, but their affinity could just as well result from employing a cultural pattern that, as M. H. Abrams demonstrated, has proven extraordinarily resilient. In any case, the differences between McClary and Attali are substantial; whereas his overriding concern is to interpret the social history of music through economics, her primary focus is on gender and sexuality, so that while he attributes the fall from unity to commodification, she links this

stage to an excess of individuality, to “extravagant, individualistic assertion,” which carries the implication of masculine aggression.

Moreover, significant differences also result from the divergence between writing history in a French versus an Anglo-American tradition. McClary’s notion that a “general crisis” produced a radical break in music history in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century recalls T. S. Eliot’s idea of a “dissociation of sensibility,” a split between intellect and emotion that occurred in the seventeenth century, leading to a degeneration of English poetry. This idea, which Christopher Norris calls a “massively influential myth,” was embraced by the New Critics, with profound consequences for the way in which English literary history was understood and taught in the twentieth century.<sup>21</sup> Through the dissociation of sensibility, Eliot transposed his distaste for romanticism back in time, finding symptoms of romantic excess in the seventeenth century; the “elevation of the *personal* and *individual* over the *typical*,”<sup>22</sup> for which Eliot had once condemned Rousseau, became a sign of a cultural malaise that had appeared much earlier. McClary’s suspicion of “extravagant, individualistic assertion” suggests an affinity with Eliot’s antiromantic values. Yet as Norris points out, the idea of a dissociated sensibility can be defined only by contrast to a unified, organic sensibility conceived along Hegelian lines, so that “Eliot’s avowed antipathy to Romanticism goes along with a covert adherence to its whole working system of evaluative terms and categories.”<sup>23</sup> Does this suggest a similar contradiction in McClary’s thought? Since the historical scheme she adopts is by no means her own invention but has a history of its own, it may have a potential to escape her control and to produce implications at odds with her avowed intentions and her own politics. Significantly, Eliot’s thesis betrays a covert (and deeply conservative) political agenda, one that was nurtured by his reading of French reactionary thinkers, including Charles Maurras, for whom the order of hierarchical and authoritarian institutions represents a condition for writing great literature. This nostalgia for a vanished hierarchy appealed to the agrarian ideology of the predominantly Southern New Critics. By valorizing “ideals of harmony, balance, stability” and “images of Renaissance *harmonia*” over individual assertion, McClary’s argument could be read as an endorsement of hierarchy, despite her general tendency to link hierarchy to masculine authority. Significantly, she does not examine any medieval or Renaissance music, but simply uses it as a foil to the later music she discusses. Nor, despite her general refusal to accept cultural phenomena at face value, does she ask whether these “images of . . . *harmonia*” are to be taken as read.

Although McClary’s second phase constitutes a fall it is one marked by an ambivalent potential, because this era also brings the first representations of gender and sexuality to music. These are divided between “images of pleasure”—also characterized as pleasure/pain—which were “most often projected onto women” (p. 125), and “images of desire,” which were “more often wielded by male characters” (p. 126). Thus her second phase is



touched by a brief moment of potential equality between men and women, which she attributes to the contemporary belief that “both male and female partners had to be aroused to the point of ejaculation” for conception to occur (p. 37). Images of pleasure/pain evoke “a quality of timeless, sustained hovering,” produced by devices such as ostinato patterns or modal ambiguity (p. 125). Images of desire, on the other hand, derive from the longing for the cadence generated by seventeenth-century tonality (p. 125).

Thereafter—and this is phase three—music went to hell in a hand-basket, as masculine images of desire, embodied in the propulsive thrust of tonality, won out over the representation of feminine sexuality. After the seventeenth century, “the ostinato and the voluptuous pleasure/pain images disappeared” (p. 126), and “patriarchy and the nobility returned with a vengeance in later court operas” (p. 51). In this narrative, tonality is the villain; for McClary, tonality is manipulative, coercive, and predictable. The cadence, for example, “is, in fact, the most banal, most conventionalized cliché available within any given musical style. . . . Moreover, its appearance always spells a kind of death” (p. 127). When the desire for closure is pushed to the limit, as often in Beethoven and Mahler, “desire in their narratives frequently culminates (as though necessarily) in explosive violence” (p. 127).

In McClary’s fourth phase, female musicians—and her chief exemplars are Diamanda Galas, Janika Vandervelde, Laurie Anderson, and Madonna—have recovered feminine images of pleasure and restored the ideals of both phase one and the positive aspects of phase two. Part of Vandervelde’s *Genesis II*, for example, reminds her of medieval music, so that the lost unity of that period returns.

It is no coincidence that *Genesis II*’s clockwork is reminiscent of medieval music: both are marked by relatively noncoercive modal techniques that delight in the present moment, rhythms that are grounded in the physicality and repetitiveness of dance, and the kind of carefully regulated contrapuntal interplay that Renaissance theorists associated with the harmony of the spheres, of nature and humankind, of soul and body. (p. 119)

This sort of reconciliation of opposites—nature and humanity, soul and body—is exactly what typically happens in romantic narratives of unity lost and regained. In keeping with these romantic precedents, the return to origins occurs with enhanced consciousness, with irony: McClary portrays her composers as self-consciously manipulating and critiquing the cultural expectations of prior music. Thus both Laurie Anderson and Madonna, for example, execute brilliant “deconstructions” of classical tonality. In “O Superman,” Anderson questions “the metaphysics of traditional tonal music . . . [H]aving invoked the kind of dualistic axis upon which conventional tonal narratives rely, she deftly manages to unhinge it” (p. 143). She does this by alternating C minor and A<sup>b</sup> major triads so persistently that we become unsure which is the tonic—“which is structural and which is ornamental”



(p. 142). Madonna's "Live to Tell" presents similar ambiguities by oscillating between the keys of D minor and F major, "suggesting a blurred region in which both keys cohabit" (p. 160), thus escaping the tyranny of tonal narratives. Here a crucial contradiction surfaces in McClary's argument: oscillation between keys a third apart and blurred tonal regions are the stock-in-trade of late romantic music, including Mahler. Yet when Mahler transgresses classical tonality in the Second Symphony and ends in the "wrong" key—a typical move for composers like Mahler, Wagner, Strauss, Wolf, and others—McClary sees this as an act of desperation, evincing a desire for closure so strong it will grasp at straws.

[T]he listener is drawn through a minefield punctuated with detonations to the glory of the final triad. It isn't even the "correct" final triad, for we began this symphony in C minor and ought to be ending in C major rather than this overwrought E flat major. Yet our desire for transcendence and closure is so intense at this moment that it all seems worthwhile, even if it means the annihilation of identity. (p. 121)

This contradiction suggests the tension between McClary's antipathy to romanticism and the covert romanticism of her chosen narrative pattern, as well as the difficulties of finding a feminine subject position. When she wants to celebrate the individuality of exemplary women, she has to resort to a vocabulary of transgressive, heroic individualism that challenges tradition. Let no one think that I consider this contradiction a personal failure on her part; her work is a response to a cultural dilemma to which there is no simple solution.

A key issue that arises in comparing McClary's version of history to Attali's is the striking difference in the time period each assigns to the second phase of the narrative, representation. McClary herself notes this in her afterword to *Noise*, saying that whereas Attali places representation in the nineteenth century, she assigns it to the seventeenth.<sup>24</sup> This discrepancy—a little matter of two centuries—should alert us that we are not dealing not so much with variations in empirical observation as with different ideological constructions of history. I suspect that the difference can be traced, in part, to the roles that certain traumatic events have played in different national traditions. For the French, their revolution continues to have a radical impact; for a conservative or reactionary tradition that extends from Joseph de Maistre to Charles Maurras, the revolution was viewed as a moment of unique evil, as an expulsion from paradise. Without sharing their political outlook, Attali does acknowledge the special nature of the revolution by placing representation post 1789. For Anglo-American traditions of scholarship, however, the French Revolution lacks the same cultural resonance. Thus when Eliot adopted the ideas of French thinkers like Maurras, he transposed the traumatic fall back to the time of the English Revolution: "Thus, with profound effect on literary criticism for the next

half century, English literary history comes to be written after a French model in which 1688 corresponds to 1789 as the date of ejection from the Eden of authoritarian institutions.”<sup>25</sup> Given the framework of criticism within which McClary works, it is not surprising that her chronology corresponds more closely to Eliot’s than to Attali’s.

The correspondences I have noted between the patterns Attali and McClary find in history and the rhetorical models that preexist their work raise questions about the interplay between invention and discovery in the writing of history. By analyzing other works of musical scholarship in terms of their narrative and rhetorical strategies, readers can move toward answering these questions for themselves, while deciding to what extent my observations here have a wider application. Here as elsewhere I envision the role of critique more as a stimulus to the reader’s imagination than as a definitive result.

## IV

—Let’s return to the question we left hanging at the end of our previous discussion, because it may allow us to connect issues developed throughout part II concerning the relationship between the subject and the object in musical research, issues that are intimately intertwined even if you sometimes explored them separately for the sake of clarity. You’ll recall we disagreed about the potential uses of psychoanalysis: I was willing to concede that it might contribute to our knowledge *about* music, but I balked at the idea that it might help us interrogate the status of knowledge itself, or the relation between knowledge and a subject. Although you have not convinced me completely, your position now seems more plausible because of the way you have integrated a psychoanalytic account of the conditions underlying subjectivity with a deconstructive account of the conditions underlying knowledge, since the constructed nature of our disciplinary *objects* can be a source of anxiety for the *subject*. A particular organization of knowledge can become a site of unconscious investments and identifications, and one becomes vulnerable to the relations of rivalry and emulation that Lacan theorized in the mirror stage.

In trying to analyze my lingering resistance to such notions, I keep returning to Ingrid Monson’s concerns about vernacular knowledge to which I referred in our previous conversation; I worry as she does that the knowledge and experience of those without a sophisticated theoretical background will be devalued. This danger came to the fore in your discussion of Kay Kaufman Shelemay’s work in chapter 3, where you argued that she identified too strongly with the subjects of her study, with an idealized image of how they see themselves, and you stressed how this element of idealization not only affects her construction of Syrian Jewish identity but also her professional self-image. But it seems to me that she has accurately reported her informants’ descriptions of how they experience themselves in their music, of how it affects them, how it makes them feel about themselves and

their community. So shouldn't we respect this vernacular knowledge? I don't wish to deny the contrary evidence you mentioned, and I'll admit that some members of the community didn't seem to share the generally celebratory attitude toward the pizmonim. But the majority of her informants felt otherwise, and ascribed a healing power to the pizmonim, the power to unite past and present, individual and collective memory, words and music, and so on. So when you characterize Shelemay's interpretation as an idealization, I wonder where that leaves her informants: does it invalidate their perception of themselves and their experience of their own music? And does this idealization somehow contaminate all of Shelemay's conclusions?

—Since idealization plays a role in all processes of identification, her depiction of that aspect of Syrian Jewish identity constitutes a valuable contribution to the field, regardless of any reservations I may express in other regards. But while I agree that we must respect vernacular knowledge, that respect must extend to everyone's knowledge, including those with different views, such as the two girls who told her they were bored, that this wasn't their music. We need to understand how these conflicting forms of vernacular knowledge interact, particularly if we regard social identity, following Laclau and Mouffe, as a differential system in which the presence of any element modifies all the others. This is where we need a more dialectical concept of experience: if we're trying to understand collective, sociocultural identities, we have to honor individual experience without absolutizing it. Even within relatively homogeneous groups such as the Syrian Jews in Brooklyn, we still encounter a variety of social divisions (based on gender, age, economic status, political attitudes, and so on); we need to know not only how different individuals experience their group identity from their various perspectives but also how individual experience registers the effects of these social divisions, how different subject positions interact in the community. Here the psychoanalytic insight that such divisions may be disavowed by identifying with an idealized image seems to offer the most plausible alternative, because it allows us to interpret certain gaps in Shelemay's account while attributing new significance to what would otherwise seem marginal details such as the story about the two girls. So psychoanalysis can help us discover blind spots in our knowledge, helping us to interrogate and modify our identifications, and to recognize the often violent exclusions through which we police our sense of self.

—For all your warning about rhetorical violence in musical research, it seems to me that you risk doing violence to the authors you discuss by viewing each through the lens of a particular plot line. By analyzing Lawrence Kramer's *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*, for example, through the archetypal romance plot, do you suppress aspects of his work that might resist this schema? And so on with Shelemay and the others: there is a danger of putting each into a box, and imposing the kind of classifying and pigeonholing that you deplore elsewhere in musical studies.

—"Box" is an apt description. But does this sense of confinement, this claustrophobia, result from imposing an alien schema on their work or from discovering an impulse, within each text, toward a particular type of narra-

tive closure? Part of my strategy has been to explode this closure, to find the tensions and conflicting interpellations that work against it. In Kramer's case, for example, the romance plot has to be read in tension with his summary of his own position, as what I call a counterabstract, so we can see how the agon that drives a romance plot causes him to characterize modernist and postmodernist musicology through a series of binary oppositions, thus contradicting his own understanding of postmodernism. So I am interested in both the narrative "box" and in what stubbornly sticks out of it, what resists enclosure.

—But still, your book has its own story line, and its own impulse toward narrative closure. You analyzed a narrative common to Attali and McClary involving a fall into disunity, a moment when an original state of oneness is fractured. But your own book describes a similar fall, does it not? In your first chapter you analyze a process of professionalization, a movement within the university toward a managerial mentality in which knowledge becomes a commodity. This parallels Attali's belief that in representation music becomes a commodity in becoming exchangeable for money. How do you explain this discrepancy? If your aim is to expose a certain covert romanticism in the texts you analyze, you contradict yourself by embracing a similar romantic narrative.

—Yes, I do invoke some of the same narrative patterns that I find in Attali and McClary. But my point is not that resorting to narrative is illegitimate, nor is my analysis of their narrative rhetoric meant to discredit them. Narrative, after all, is a form of cognition, as Paul Ricoeur and others have noted. In McClary's work, for example, I do not maintain that her romantic impulses are necessarily bad, but only that she seems unaware of them, so that her text performs on a narrative level what it denies in its more overt statements. A key danger lies in naturalizing a given narrative mode and effacing its construction, its status as a rhetorical act. By foregrounding the narrative level of my text, invoking archetypal myths such as that of Babel, inventing little fables, and writing dialogues, I try to acknowledge that my story *is* a story. At the same time I should also remark that I share a narrative design with Attali and McClary only up to a point, because by stressing the divisions in social identity I make it clear that there can be no return to origins. I cannot promise the narrative closure of a fully achieved identity, or the satisfaction of a journey home.

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## **Part III**

### *Media, Society, Ethics*

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## PRELUDE

After Dorothy returned to Kansas, things were never the same. She missed the music in Oz, the way people would spontaneously burst into song, the Munchkin chorus, the melodious lion. Auntie Em tried to console her: "Even if no one in Kansas can carry a tune, at least we don't have witches or flying monkeys. Be grateful for that!" But Dorothy was not grateful. "Besides," Auntie Em continued, "we have some things here that they'll never have there." "Such as?" demanded Dorothy. Auntie Em pursed her lips in thought for a moment, and then replied: "Such as television. I bet you never saw a TV set in Oz, did you?" Dorothy had to admit that she had never seen one there. "Aha!" Auntie Em cackled triumphantly. But Dorothy still missed the music.

From time to time Dorothy tried to explain colors to Auntie Em. "You see, in Kansas everything is in black and white. But in Oz there are the Ruby Slippers, the Yellow Brick Road, the Emerald City . . ." It was no use. "Did you know," said Auntie Em, "that the human eye can distinguish sixty-two different shades of gray?" Dorothy missed the music more than ever. Suddenly Auntie Em had an idea. "Some day, when we can afford a color TV, I'll be able to see what you're talking about."

That day arrived sooner than Auntie Em had dared to hope. The government paid her to build a missile silo in her cornfield, and the first thing she bought with her financial windfall was a new television. It was the first color TV in the state; the poet laureate of Kansas came to watch them connect the plug. When they turned it on, the screen glowed with all the colors of Oz. "Now," said Auntie Em, "you'll never have to leave home again."

But Dorothy still missed the music.



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## 6

### MEDIA CONDITIONS

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#### I

Who are we? In one of his late seminars, Lacan gives an unsettling answer to this question: “You are now, infinitely more than you think, subjects of instruments that, from the microscope right down to the radiotelevision, are becoming the elements of your existence.”<sup>1</sup> We are the subjects of instruments; the gadgets and gizmos we invent have also invented us. Devices such as microscopes, x-ray machines, CAT scans, MRIs, and ultrasound do not simply extend perception by allowing us to peer into the nooks and crannies of the human body; they also establish a new relation to corporality, new sources of identity, new mental images for what it is to be human. Once only the gods could watch the fetus in the womb; now every proud parent can purchase ultrasound images of future offspring. Radio, telephone, television, and film do not simply record or transmit images and sounds; they alter perception, create new modes of sociality, transform time and space. Lacan’s insight reflects his attempt to theorize the historical and social formation of the individual; the subject is fabricated out of historically available possibilities. Nowadays the signifiers, images, and fantasies that compose the subject circulate through media, particularly as the post-industrial economy revolves more and more around the consumption of signs.<sup>2</sup> In seeking to obey the motto of the Delphic oracle—“Know thyself!”—we must recognize that modern media have transformed both the means of knowledge and the self under examination.

Friedrich Kittler has further explored this juncture of technology, psychoanalysis, and culture by suggesting that the separation of media into silent film, the typewriter, and sound recording around the 1880s provided the historical preconditions for the Lacanian triad of Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. In Kittler’s view, film is the medium of the Imaginary, because it substitutes an imaginary continuum (at twenty-four frames per second) for

real movement. The typewriter is the medium of the Symbolic, because it replaces the flow of cursive writing with a finite set of discrete elements (for the same reason the computer is a symbolic medium). Finally, the phonograph is the medium of the Real, because it records a real continuum of sound, “the voice with all the stochasticism of its oscillations or frequencies,” and neither a symbolic reduction (like musical notation) nor an imaginary continuum (like film).<sup>3</sup> Although Kittler’s media theory does not exhaust the significance of Lacan’s categories, I find it provocative. One might extend Kittler’s insights to explain the paradoxical nature of *jouissance*, the excess pleasure, the pleasure-in-pain, that plays such a role in Lacan’s theory of the subject. *Jouissance* is at once our most intimate experience and yet radically foreign, the most central part of our being and yet an alien presence. This sense of being invaded by *jouissance* may come from its relation to media. As children paralyzed with fear by the flying monkeys in *The Wizard of Oz* demonstrate, external images may provoke the horrifying excitement of *jouissance* before they are internalized.

Turning to music, media have drastically altered musical experience. As Jacques Attali observes, recording represents “a very deep transformation of the relation to music” rather than a mere change “in the technological conditions of music listening.”<sup>4</sup> Technology has made new types of music possible, involving electronically amplified instruments, synthesized sounds, computer-assisted composition, as well as new hybrid art forms, while also creating novel modes of living with music (jogging while wearing a Walkman, whistling TV jingles, downloading songs from Napster). In this climate of technological innovation, musical research has found new disciplinary objects. For Marcia Citron, for example, video versions of opera do not merely preserve live productions, they also change the experience of opera itself.<sup>5</sup> For Albin Zak, the recording itself is an object of study in its own right, including every scratch and hiss, every snap, crackle, and pop of recorded sound.<sup>6</sup> For Nicholas Cook, hybrid media, from TV commercials to performance art, demand new forms of analysis.<sup>7</sup>

Here my concern is less with music technology in itself than with how our formation as subjects in a media culture affects what can be said about music. In chapter 2 I suggested that although musical research already constitutes an interface between media—music and writing—today the status of writing is complicated by the mediated nature of “reality” itself; writing no longer functions as a “general medium” for representing reality.<sup>8</sup> It may be productive, then, to understand the subject who writes about music, regardless of subject matter, as constituted through transactions with a variety of media. Here an example may be helpful. In his analysis of Thomas Pynchon’s *Vineland*, John Johnston points out that television and film function here as two different modes of constructing an identity. The rapt absorption of film produces a divided self that identifies with an external image, while the “diffracted kind of attention” of TV watching produces a blizzard of partial identifications, leading to a fractalized self. The novel

registers these mediated identities through such devices as sentences that mimic the effects of TV viewing through their dispersive syntax.<sup>9</sup> To understand the cultural networks in which statements about music come into existence today, it will be helpful to treat these statements within a context of technical media.

Yet although technology provides a set of background conditions, it does not wholly determine what is said. "Where there is power," Foucault taught us, "there is resistance."<sup>10</sup> Here one source of potential resistance lies in the unintended consequences of technology (to which Johnston has called attention).<sup>11</sup> The potential for technology to escape our control opens a space for resistance, for turning it against itself. In music we see this, for example, in the flexible and subversive use of technology in the music of ethnic minorities, in performance art, and elsewhere. Tricia Rose has pointed out how techniques like sampling and scratching the turntable in hip-hop music can reappropriate "high" technology;<sup>12</sup> Dick Hebdige finds similar devices in punk and reggae;<sup>13</sup> Susan McClary has analyzed Laurie Anderson's complex relation to technology, stressing that "she insists on and problematizes her mediation";<sup>14</sup> Mark Slobin has shown how people in Afghanistan evaded both the official Afghan and neighboring Soviet broadcasting systems by recording local musicians on cassettes.<sup>15</sup> A similar potential exists in our internalization of media; we can negotiate with, reinvent, resist, reappropriate, subvert, and critique the media systems in which we live.

## II

If media technology, as I have just suggested, generates an uncontrollable excess even as it helps to construct social reality, then both those claiming to master it and those claiming to be outside it are mistaken. Yet this sort of misrecognition may provide leverage for critique, allowing one to write a counterabstract by arguing that the self-perception or self-definition of a group is incomplete or partly erroneous. It is with this aim that I shall redeem a promissory note from chapter 1 by returning to the work of Eugene Narmour and Wayne Koestenbaum. Readers will recall how I contrasted their reactions to *Der Rosenkavalier*; the very phrase that inspired Koestenbaum to rhapsodize about bending time and gender led Narmour to measure minute variations among performances with a digital stopwatch.<sup>16</sup> This dichotomy seems emblematic of the tensions in current musical research, in which factions embrace radically different values, treating each other with contempt, or sometimes with a bland tolerance that is a mask for indifference. By considering some historical conditions of possibility that underlie their styles of thought, I hope to show how the impasses arise. Obviously I cannot hope to examine these conditions exhaustively, but I believe that some of the most subtle and significant connections involve their internalization of technology.

In Narmour's case, his engagement with technical media seems obvious (although I shall argue that it is more complex than meets the eye). As he states, his theory is explicitly designed for empirical testing: "I have purposely designed the analytical rules expostulated here for psychological experiment." At one point, Narmour lists twenty-one experiments that might support his theory and notes that "hundreds more are possible."<sup>17</sup> His theory is a language-machine for producing statements about music, statements that can be tested by statistical methods.

With Koestenbaum, however, things appear different; in his book, gay identity is explicitly examined through a series of charged, visceral, erotic responses to opera; his lyrical elegy for the opera queen, his evocative meditation on opera and gay identity would seem very distant from technology: What machine could capture his prismatic spirit? If we ask how Koestenbaum lives his identity, however, it is produced under historically specific circumstances that are inseparable from modern media. As Koestenbaum himself recognizes, sound recordings made the phenomenon of the modern opera queen possible by turning a public spectacle into an occasion for private reverie: "an art of excess and display, it became an art of introspection and interiors" (p. 47). Recordings sustain his love affair with opera; he confesses that he usually prefers solitary listening to the experience of the opera house, sometimes comparing himself to a shut-in or convalescent, and fetishizes LPs, comparing their holes and grooves to the recesses of men's bodies (p. 48). Charles Keil has lamented the lack of studies of how people personalize music technology, how they incorporate it into their lives,<sup>18</sup> but Koestenbaum's book is a full-length study of eroticizing technology as a mode of appropriating it.

In addition to providing the potential for solitary listening, the phonograph transforms his experience of opera in at least four ways:

1. The absence of live opera's visual spectacle creates an empty space for fantasy, a blank screen on which to project all sorts of personal fantasy images; I will later suggest that a sort of *cinematic imagination* operates to fill this blank screen, so that another technical medium infiltrates Koestenbaum's consciousness. Here the phonograph creates the conditions of possibility for Koestenbaum's style of thought without determining it; other listeners might react to the same conditions in different ways, perhaps by treating operatic recordings as a kind of abstract, "absolute" music, or by treating them as Muzak, using them as pleasant background noise for their daily activities.

2. By allowing for repeated acts of listening, recordings enable Koestenbaum to reenact past listening experiences, so that the recollection of hearing particular performances becomes a kind of self-reflection (recalling his adolescent reactions to *Carmen*, for example, while listening to it now). Listening becomes an occasion for self-interrogation, introspective and autobiographical. Again, other listeners might respond to the same technical conditions differently; Jacques Attali, for example, regards the phonographic

reproduction of sound as the occasion for a culture of repetition in which all consumers become identical and interchangeable. For Koestenbaum, however, repetition individualizes, becoming part of a continual process of self-examination. Because Koestenbaum is ever changing, *Carmen* becomes a river into which one can never step twice.

3. The absence of the singer's body in the recorded voice paradoxically foregrounds the physicality of vocal production; Koestenbaum becomes conscious of the body, monitoring his own bodily sensations while also contemplating the body from which the voice emerges—the throat, the lips, the tongue, the teeth, the diaphragm, and so on. Again, other listeners might respond differently to the phenomenon of the acousmatic voice (as Michel Chion calls it)—the voice without place, without physical location, that recordings make possible. Rather than concentrating on the corporeality of sound, one might contemplate sound as a disembodied, spiritualized event, transcending the physical.

4. Finally, the absence of visual images concentrates attention on the voice as object-cause of desire and *jouissance*. Koestenbaum explores the limits of operatic/erotic pleasure, the regions where pleasure blurs into displeasure. His early experiences of opera “filled me with an uncanny discomfort that I now call pleasure” (p. 154). Operatic voices evoked feelings of shame and embarrassment as well as ecstasy, fears of exposure along with fascination. This excess pleasure, this pleasure-in-displeasure, is *jouissance*, which is the true subject of his book. Reading Koestenbaum, one may feel the same ambivalence, the same repulsion/fascination, and I suspect that some of the resistance to his work results from this tension. One might experience the uncanny sense that Žižek describes in a scene from Steven Spielberg's film *Empire of the Sun*, in which an English boy interned in a Japanese prison camp watches the preflight rituals of a group of kamikaze pilots. As they depart on their suicidal mission he sings a hymn in a state of weird rapture; his fellow prisoners watch him with awed embarrassment, as if they have glimpsed the core of his being, the fantasmatic kernel of his *jouissance*.<sup>19</sup>

If Koestenbaum's readers may sometimes feel that they have gotten too close, that they have trespassed on the soul's innermost sanctuary, Narmour's readers may suspect that all introspection, intimacy, and interiority have been systematically excluded. This exclusion results in part from Narmour's search for cognitive universals. He believes that the theoretical constants of his model, which are derived from the Gestalt laws of proximity, similarity, and common direction, represent innate cognitive functions that govern the listener's “bottom-up” expectancy system. Given a repeated pitch, C–C, Narmour hypothesizes that the listener will unconsciously expect “continuation,” that is, another C. Given a whole-step ascent C–D, the listener will unconsciously expect “process,” that is, an E.<sup>20</sup> These universals are not accessible to individual introspection; even if my thought processes were completely transparent to me, I cannot know whether such

processes are universal or merely idiosyncratic. Only experiments with multiple test subjects could validate Narmour's hypotheses. He cites an experiment by J. C. Carlsen that provides "hints" of the validity of the implication-realization model. Test subjects, who were college-age music majors, were played a series of melodic intervals and asked to sing what they considered the most natural continuation: "listeners sang continuation of both ascending and descending minor seconds 48 percent and 38 percent of the time respectively."<sup>21</sup> Thus only statistics, not introspection, can provide evidence here.

Since these bottom-up rules are "hardwired in our neuronal systems," the listener in Narmour's model resembles a computer,<sup>22</sup> an impersonal calculating machine. These rules constitute "a brute, mandatory system, always operating, reflexively computing intervallic width and generating perceived implications from the bottom up."<sup>23</sup> Narmour believes that "we are born with a structuring input program rather than with any Gestalt structures themselves."<sup>24</sup> Thus another technical medium provides an enabling condition for Narmour's style of thought.

Along with the mandatory, Gestalt-based rules of bottom-up perception, Narmour also acknowledges that the comprehension of musical styles is learned rather than innate. The patterns established within a single piece or within the confines of a particular style can generate expectations that may interfere with or even override the bottom-up Gestalt rules. The theorist's responsibility is to establish "norms of interaction" between bottom-up and top-down modes of perception: "this includes discovering the schematic complex style structures that conformantly generate learned implications at variance . . . with the implications dictated by the bottom-up Gestalt rules."<sup>25</sup> Thus both Narmour's bottom-up and top-down rules exclude introspection as a source of data; there are universals that we unconsciously invoke without awareness; there are "norms of interaction" from which individuals may deviate and which no individual embodies, just as no actual person has 2.3 children. Thus we have radically different standards of verification for Narmour and Koestenbaum, different modes of what constitutes successful explanation of musical phenomena. In Narmour, anyone can occupy the position of neutral, scientific observer of musical phenomena; anyone can repeat the experiments he suggests. Theoretical claims must be subject to falsifiability and supported by empirical data: "Only through the marshaling of empirical evidence can an analyst ever know whether he or she faithfully represents the shared experience of competent listeners. Only through this can an analyst avoid mapping his or her own idiosyncratic, and thus prejudicial, experience onto the analysis."<sup>26</sup> Koestenbaum's book, on the other hand, is all about mapping his idiosyncracies onto the music, so that evaluating his work is akin to evaluating an autobiography. He is both the object and the subject of observation; readers can find parallels to their own experience in his work but cannot repeat his ex-

periments. Statements such as “43 percent of test subjects found significant overtones of gayness in the rising sixth leap” have no place in his work.

Yet precisely where Narmour and Koestenbaum seem most antithetical—around this issue of norms and statistics—they reveal their participation in a common cultural network. Although the idea of investigating norms seems self-evident today, Ian Hacking observes that the word “normal” only acquired its principal modern meaning in the 1820s, when the Enlightenment idea of human nature was displaced by the concept of normality:

“Normal” bears the stamp of the nineteenth century and its conception of progress, just as “human nature” is engraved with the hallmark of the Enlightenment. We no longer ask, in all seriousness, what is human nature? Instead, we talk about normal people. We ask, is this behavior normal? Is it normal for an eight-year-old girl to . . . ? Research foundations are awash with funds for finding out what is normal.<sup>27</sup>

This investigation of norms in psychology, sociology, medical discourse, and so on, was connected to what Foucault calls “biopower”<sup>28</sup>—to the technologies for the surveillance and control of life, including the management of sexuality and reproduction. Norms are inseparable from statistics, from what Hacking calls the “avalanche of printed numbers” that began after the Napoleonic era.<sup>29</sup> Not only did governments begin to publish population data formerly regarded as state secrets, but they invented more and more categories for information gathering. Whereas the first American census, for example, posed only four questions to each household, the tenth census asked “13,010 questions on various schedules addressed to people, firms, farms, hospitals, churches, and so forth.”<sup>30</sup> Here we encounter a seismic shift in the relationship of people and governments and in the way we conceptualize both individuals and society.

These statistics do not merely record preexisting facts; before people can be counted, they must be subsumed under a category (the set of all dyslexic smokers, the set of all teenage suicides, the set of all opera queens); someone must decide that a particular shared characteristic unites a group of people. (Hacking calls this “making up people.”)<sup>31</sup> This discourse of norms also transformed the relationship between persons and their sexual acts. According to Foucault, the concept of sodomy in ancient civil and canon law only designated a category of certain proscribed acts; the perpetrator of these acts was only their “juridical subject.” The discourse of norms and perversions, on the other hand, chained individuals to life histories; the kinds of preferred sexual acts became expressions of one’s identity, one’s personality, one’s innermost essence: “the nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a lifeform, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anat-



omy and possibly a mysterious physiology.”<sup>32</sup> At the same time, however, norms create the possibility for resistance, for a “reverse discourse.” In the case of homosexuality, for example, Foucault points out that the invention of homosexuality as an identity category (which he dates from Westphal’s 1870 article) made it possible to transvalue normalizing classifications.<sup>33</sup> This is what Koestenbaum does; he simultaneously accepts and contests the type of sexual identity made available through normalization.

Thus the discourse of norms and deviations becomes a condition of possibility both for Koestenbaum assuming a certain sexual identity and for Narmour regarding statistical confirmation and normative hearing as a significant theoretical goal.

### III

Their different relations to media provide a means to differentiate their respective discursive objects, particularly with regard to the construction of memory. After all, the data-processing of a culture, the aids to memory that are technically available, affects the structure of memory itself. Part of Narmour’s project of understanding the listener’s competence involves memory. He is concerned with how we relate past and future, memory and anticipation, in listening to music, with both “prospective” and “retrospective” hearing and with the process of learning both in the context of a style and within the individual piece. Koestenbaum, meanwhile, is obsessed with commemoration: he describes his book as “an elegy for the opera queen” (p. 41) and repeatedly calls it “a scrapbook,” thus invoking two genres associated with remembrance. He regards the phenomenon of the opera queen as one that depends on the closet; this gives the whole book a twilight, retrospective quality (p. 84). Moreover, the trauma of AIDS has also made it urgent to recall the past (p. 41).

Narmour’s tape recorder becomes a prosthetic memory: it remembers for him; this is also the case with his reliance on musical scores, another technology. These technologies provide musical objects that are repeatable and retain their identity over time, so that Narmour can use the scientific experiment as a model, as he subjects these musical objects to repeated measurements, observations, and calculations. The memory objects that Koestenbaum seeks, however, are not repeatable, even if the recordings themselves are. This elusiveness of memory becomes evident, for example, when he writes about trying to recall a melody from *Les contes d’Hoffmann*: “I could have borrowed a score or a record to verify the melody. But I wanted a more absolute retrieval” (p. 222). What is this “more absolute retrieval”? It has to do with the imbrication of music, desire, and identity, in which recordings become part of a complex web of aural, tactile, visual, and even olfactory memories that involve the enigmatic origins of gay desire. Recollections of listening are invested with erotic memories: “In my dorm room,

I listened to Donna Elvira's 'Ah! chi mi dice mai' again and again; I wanted the boy next door to hear it" (p. 206).

We could differentiate their respective constructions of memory, then, by invoking Hegel's distinction between *Erinnerung* and *Gedächtnis*, a distinction that roughly parallels Proust's voluntary and involuntary memory (*mémoire volontaire* and *mémoire involontaire*). *Erinnerung* is living, interiorized recollection, while *Gedächtnis* is mechanical, external memory, memory that relies on mnemonic devices, on external aids such as writing. Narmour relies on voluntary memory, on the external prompts of *Gedächtnis*, while Koestenbaum seeks to trigger involuntary memory; in this respect his frequent references to Proust are not accidental. His memories have the quality of dreams, which cannot be recalled at will; indeed, he often describes real or imagined dreams, and he even refers to his project as a "dreambook."

The "living" quality of *Erinnerung* has usually been considered superior to the "dead" quality of *Gedächtnis* (witness the tendency among ethnomusicologists to privilege live or improvised music over notated music). As Paul de Man has observed, however, the notion of *Erinnerung* itself depends on external, mechanical memory, so that the hierarchy between them can be questioned.<sup>34</sup> In Koestenbaum's case, his inward, involuntary chains of association rely on external, technical memory machines such as recordings.

These memory machines also include other technologies. Film and photography also figure in his book; snapshots of divas and photos reproduced from *Opera News* or from singing manuals all contribute to the scrapbook effect. There are many references to film stars, particularly to gay icons such as Judy Garland, Mae West, Bette Davis, and Joan Crawford. His identifications with divas tend to be mediated through Hollywood stars, and thus depend on the media apparatus that sustains our modern celebrity cults (films, TV, radio, recordings, fan magazines, gossip columns, etc.). In his chapter on Maria Callas, for example, he compares her to Audrey Hepburn, Joan Crawford (in her role as Mildred Pierce), and the fictional movie star Norma Desmond, all within a few pages (pp. 141–42, p. 146). More important, the way he narrates time has a filmic quality; in this respect he again resembles Proust, whose experiments with temporality have often been compared to film. The cinematic devices for constructing images of time do not merely represent experience; the potential of montage to condense time or slow it down, to fragment and manipulate it, changes perception and consciousness.

Koestenbaum's paragraphs often mimic the rhythm of cinematic editing and the filmic juxtaposition of times. Consider a striking example, in which he links a series of visual images through the theme of urination. We start with a flashback: "memory of an old man incontinent at a matinee of *Hänsel und Gretel* (his urine-streaked slacks a caution) prompts me to pee before any opera, even short *Salome*, begins" (p. 36). Then we cut to the present: "See the line of men in Family circle, waiting for the urinals . . . the

awkwardness of so many gay men in line . . . see the long lines of expensively dressed women waiting in the Grand Tier for a chance to relieve themselves" (p. 37). Now we shift to a dream sequence: "in a dream, a diva whom I'd just heard sing Desdemona . . . was urinating onstage" (p. 37).

In this scene, Koestenbaum trades on the potential of cinematic montage to form associations among temporally separated images. A series of similarities and oppositions links the flashback to the dream: in the former we have an old man, in the latter a (presumably) younger woman; one is a spectator, the other a performer; both are depicted as urinating in public; both are observed by the narrator, exposed to his gaze. The juxtaposition of these images creates a composite image that suggests how close pleasure is to pain, how much the old man's embarrassment and loss of control resembles a performer's display (the diva's urination is a sign of her "risky" interpretation). This painful pleasure, this pleasure-in-pain, is *jouissance*. One effect of Koestenbaum's combination of media effects, then, is to create cinematic images that evoke *jouissance*, imitating the operations of montage to create erotically invested images that capture the *jouissance* of embodied sound. If Kittler is correct in calling cinema the medium of the Imaginary, then Koestenbaum works in the Imaginary to intervene in the Real, using images to trigger *jouissance*. Since *jouissance* belongs to the Real, since it is not accessible to language, finding images for it becomes a way to share it, to communicate it. Without these complex relations to media, then, Koestenbaum's experience of gay identity, and his attempts to communicate that experience, would be vastly different.

If Koestenbaum wants to imaginize the Real, Narmour wants to symbolize it, to encode musical experience in a lawful system. Since the computer is the symbolic medium par excellence, it is perhaps not surprising that Narmour turns the listener into a calculating machine. For the listener to operate this way, pitches and rhythms must become discrete elements in a differential system, operating like the keys of a typewriter. The consequences of this become particularly evident in extensions of Narmour's work into the area of computer modeling. Robert Gjerdingen, for example, in a study that cites Narmour, adopts the Grossberg-Rudd neuronal network model of visual perception to account for the Gestalt phenomenon of apparent motion in music. One of the assumptions that Gjerdingen must make is that the auditory system "reduces the multiple signals produced by the frequency components of a complex tone to a unitary signal of perceived pitch."<sup>35</sup> This reduction of pitch to a one-dimensional point is necessary both for Gjerdingen's immediate purposes and for Narmour's system. Whereas Koestenbaum is concerned with sound "with all the stochasticism of its oscillations or frequencies" and thus with sound as captured by the phonograph, Narmour is concerned with a symbolic reduction.

If we compare Narmour and Koestenbaum in terms of their attitudes toward *jouissance*, we can better understand how each constructs an identity for himself as an observer of musical phenomena. In his attempt to mea-

sure minute differences among singers, Narmour wants to make their individuality amenable to rational calculation—to make their unique purchase on our desire measurable; the same holds for his attempt to quantify aesthetic values by establishing a strict hierarchy, for example, of degrees of surprise. This desire to calculate *jouissance* characterizes the *obsessional neurotic*, a term I use to describe a cultural symptom rather than an individual pathology; as I have said before, my interest here is in what Richard Feldstein calls “post-psychoanalysis,” that is, a kind of cultural criticism that invokes psychoanalytic categories.<sup>36</sup> The repeated measuring, testing, and data-gathering in science—or in a certain type of experimental science—institutionalizes the continual repetition and compulsive rituals associated with the obsessional. Koestenbaum, on the other hand, represents himself as a *hysteric* in the precise Lacanian sense, as someone who is aware of his own self-division, his own splitting as a subject, and who continually questions his *jouissance*. As I noted earlier, Koestenbaum is both subject and object of observation, continually spying on himself, divided between two roles. This contrasts radically with Narmour, who presents himself as a detached observer, and who thus sutures his self-division. Obsession and hysteria—considered as cultural symptoms—provide a nice way to defamiliarize Narmour and Koestenbaum; these are two alternative cultural models of selfhood, two ways for dealing with the traumatic encounter with the *jouissance* in music. Colette Soler remarks that the obsessional sustains desire as impossible, while the hysteric sustains it as unsatisfied.<sup>37</sup> Narmour clearly follows the first strategy; by keeping the analyst from “mapping his or her idiosyncratic . . . experience onto the analysis,” his own desire is strictly sequestered. Koestenbaum follows the second strategy. The continual transformation of opera into discourse through his inventive monologues, his verbal improvisations, his riffs and tangents, allows him to interrogate his desire while keeping it open, circulating around the cause of his *jouissance*. As the subtitle of his book suggests, however (“Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire”), desire remains an enigma.

#### IV

The paradoxes surrounding technology haunt Steven Feld’s reflection on the ethics of recording the music of indigenous peoples. After working with the Kaluli people of Papua New Guinea for many years and describing their culture and music in *Sound and Sentiment*, Feld had issued two “academic” recordings of their music, which received scant publicity and circulation.<sup>38</sup> In 1991, however, he collaborated with Mickey Hart, the drummer of the Grateful Dead, to produce *Voices of the Rainforest*, a CD/cassette issued under the Rykodisc label.<sup>39</sup> Feld describes this recording as “an unabashedly commercial product, meant to attract as large an audience as possible through the appeal of superb audio reproduction and vibrant musical and

natural sounds.”<sup>40</sup> By interweaving Kaluli music with ambient sounds, including birds, frogs, insects, bats, waterfalls, and the noises of people working, he condenses a typical twenty-four hour day into what he calls “one fluid sixty-minute soundscape” (p. 280).

Feld’s decision to embrace a market-oriented format rather than an academic documentary style was only reached after “years of ambivalence” (p. 278) because of the ethical dilemmas produced by technology and commodification. Since recording technology severs sounds from their sources, one can no longer control their use or interpretation. Feld laments that recording has been used to exploit the musics of indigenous peoples, turning it into a source of profitability while also making it an exotic object with voyeuristic appeal, imposing Western values and aesthetics onto it. To his credit, Feld is keenly aware of these tensions:

*Voices of the Rainforest* transparently embodies the highest of postmodern ironies: it presents for us a world uncontaminated by technology, but one that is hearable only because it has been brought to us courtesy of the most high-tech audio field and studio techniques currently available. (p. 286)

To resolve these tensions, Feld attempts to reconcile the contradiction between what he calls “ethnoaesthetics” and “technoaesthetics” (p. 283). While acknowledging the potential for exploitation latent in commercial recording, he believes that this can be offset in various ways. Since the technical quality of many recordings of world music tends to be poor, for example, giving indigenous peoples access to high-quality recordings can place their musics on an equal footing with Western music. He also describes a process in which his Kaluli assistants adjusted volume controls on two tape recorders containing transfers of component tracks, thus giving them a voice in how their music would be represented. Through this sort of “dialogic editing,” he contends that he “was able to incorporate these Kaluli ideas into the editing and mixing, pursuing and acknowledging the socially negotiated and constructed ethnoaesthetics of the production” (p. 283).

After all of Feld’s soul-searching, however, it is still possible to wonder whether all obstacles to this fusion of ethno- and technoaesthetics have been overcome. One way to pursue this issue is to consider his aesthetic decisions, particularly regarding the use of ambient sounds to create a seamless aural environment, within the context of the evolution of the aesthetics of sound and noise in the history of film. In his superb treatment of this topic, Michel Chion points out that long after the advent of sound films, sound in cinema tended to privilege voices and music, leaving little room for noise; technical limitations, such as the potential for distortion and of drowning out dialogue, tended to restrict the role of noise to a few stereotyped sound effects.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the treatment of sound in classic films of the

1930s, 1940s, 1950s and beyond tends to resemble that in a stage play, albeit one with musical accompaniment. The standardization of Dolby stereo in theaters, however, and the acoustic precision and definition that it made possible, opened the way not only to a radically expanded use of noise but eventually produced what Chion calls a “soft revolution” in film, in which sound challenged the centrality of speech: “rhythmic, dynamic, temporal, tactile and kinetic sensations . . . are perceived in themselves, not merely as coded elements in a language, a discourse, a narration. . . . Speech tends to be reinscribed in a global sensory continuum that envelops it.”<sup>42</sup>

From this perspective, a case could be made that Feld’s use of ambient sounds reflects a Western aesthetic that became increasingly prominent in films of the last quarter of the twentieth century. His recording resembles the soundtrack to a film minus the film—a paradox that is explained by the expanded role of noise since the soft revolution, which has made cinematic sound increasingly independent of the image. Feld’s desire to make the CD commercially appealing and marketable, to avoid anything that smacks of academicism, led him to emulate commercial models, to utilize his technical resources in comparable ways, and thus to emulate an aesthetic as well. If this analysis seems persuasive, it raises the issue of whether his desire for an ethnoaesthetics is compromised by an aesthetic embodied in the technology itself.

To pursue these issues further, I shall focus on two related questions: How does the “cinema of sensation” (as Chion calls it) structure not merely visual and aural perception but also the spectator’s entire sensorium? How does this restructured, technically engineered sensory field make subject positions available, potentially transforming the spectator’s identity? To begin with, the field of attention in multitrack films is no longer bounded by the rectangle of the screen; sounds issue from various locations, travel from one side of the theater to the other, and animate the space of the auditorium to produce what Chion calls a “superfield”: “I call superfield the space created, in multitrack films, by ambient natural sounds, city noises, music, and all sorts of rustlings that surround the visual space and that can issue from loudspeakers outside the physical boundaries of the screen.”<sup>43</sup> *Voices* produces a similar effect, in which stereophonic sound creates not only an aural environment but also a spatial and tactile one, in which sonic depth and movement simulate the height, depth, and distances of sounds moving through the forest canopy.

Within the “global sensory continuum” of film, the soundtrack is charged not merely with reproducing sounds but with what Chion terms their “rendering” (*rendu*). Rendering involves conveying or expressing not sounds alone but also their subjective meanings and affective properties, “perceptions which belong to no sensory channel in particular.”<sup>44</sup> When experience must be encoded through sound and vision alone, the expressive associations of sound can be diminished or lost (without the smell of salt

air, the grittiness of sand beneath our feet, and the warmth of sunshine, for example, the murmur of the surf may seem less elemental). To capture the full sensuous impact of sounds, it may be necessary to exaggerate contrasts through dubbing, mixing, and technical artifice of various sorts. Feld's technical tweaking of sounds, which he describes at great length, belongs to this aesthetics of rendering. By using recorded birdsongs to entice birds to repeat their songs at close range, for example, Feld was able to capture their voices with a clarity we might never hear in the wild; by digitally sampling the sounds of birds, frogs, and insects and rerecording these onto a multi-track master, he was able "to locate them with greater spatial and temporal specificity in the mix of forest height and depth" (p. 283).

How might this technically enhanced sensory field alter the spectator's consciousness and identity? Since multitrack films focus attention beyond the screen to a sonic space, the viewer/listener can merge with the environment, the sound becoming part of the self rather than something external. This effect of identifying with the object perceived and becoming "a container practically indistinguishable from the thing it contains,"<sup>45</sup> which characterizes many accounts of the sublime, can happen in listening to *Voices*, particularly since it does not represent a bounded performance space such as a recording studio or concert hall but instead conveys the limitless distances of the rainforest, where one can hear for miles. Žižek, who interprets Chion's film theory from a Lacanian perspective, suggests that the function of sound in contemporary cinema can reverse the former relationship between Symbolic and Real in films. Since the soundtrack now provides the fundamental narrative orientation and continuity, no longer merely commenting on the visual images, "the images are reduced to isolated fragments that float freely in the universal medium of the sound aquarium . . . the symbolic order itself is reduced to the status of floating islands of the signifier . . . in a sea of yolkly enjoyment."<sup>46</sup> This sense of floating in a sound aquarium obtains even more strongly in *Voices*, since it has no visual images at all; the narrative shape of the twenty-four hour cycle of day and night, sunrise and sunset is only suggested by an arc of degrees of sonic intensity. We find ourselves in a fantasy space, in which the meaning of the Kaluli rituals, their words, and their contexts blur and dissolve.

One of the enabling conditions, then, for *Voices* taking the form it does is the "soft revolution" in film; without the cinema of sensation and the aesthetics of rendering sound analyzed by Chion, the project of turning Kaluli life and music into a "fluid sixty-minute soundscape" would have been unthinkable. (In speaking of conditions of possibility, of course, I can only sketch some of the most salient features of a situation that is irreducibly complex and can never be exhaustively described.) In treating *Voices* not merely as a compact disc, nor even as an ethnographic document (although it is obviously both), but as a strange type of film—an imageless film—I hope to reconfigure and challenge the conventional categories through



which we understand musical scholarship. By using a CD to record the Kaluli, new types of statements about music in culture become possible. At the same time, however, the technology makes statements of its own, turning the CD into another kind of document, one that registers the state of modern Western society. Along with Feld's own explanations of his intentions, therefore, we must consider these effects produced by technology—this excess or surplus of meaning.



## 7

### MUSIC AND SOCIAL ANTAGONISMS

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#### I

What does it mean to be alive today? This sort of question—posed, of course, from the perspective of musical research—drives my work in this book: What does it mean to study music while living now, at this particular cultural moment? In a world where religious fundamentalisms flourish alongside scientific rationality, where global capitalism coexists with ethnic rivalries, in a world of reflexive modernization, of the implosion of information, what can be said about music? Who do we become when we write about music today? Who might we yet become? In the previous chapter I suggested that part of the answer lies in our relationship to communications media, both in the power of mediated images to shape identity and in the corresponding power of consciousness to internalize such images in subversive, unpredictable ways. Now I would like to explore a different yet overlapping set of conditions that influence statements about music: How do the contradictions and the social antagonisms that characterize post-modern life affect musical research?

Here I use “antagonism” in the sense defined by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who use this term to describe social divisions that cannot be fully symbolized or represented; in contrast to logical contradictions and real oppositions, both of which involve objective relations, antagonisms reveal the limit of objectivity:

In the case of contradictions, it is because *A is fully A* that being-not-A is a contradiction—and therefore an impossibility. In the case of real opposition, it is because *A is also fully A* that its relation with *B* produces an objectively determinable effect. But in the case of antagonism, we are confronted with a different situation: the presence of the “Other” prevents me from being fully myself. The relation arises not from full totalities, but

from the impossibility of their constitution. The presence of the Other is not a logical impossibility; it exists; so it is not a contradiction. But neither is it subsumable as a positive differential moment in a causal chain, for in that case the relation would be given by what each force is and there would be no negation of this being. (It is because a physical force is a physical force that another identical and countervailing force leads to rest; in contrast, it is because a peasant *cannot be* a peasant that an antagonism exists with the landowner expelling him from his land.) Insofar as there is antagonism, I cannot be a full presence for myself. But nor is the force that antagonizes me such a presence: its objective being is a symbol of my non-being and, in this way, it is overflowed by a plurality of meanings which prevent its being fixed as full positivity.<sup>1</sup>

In chapter 1, I cited Laclau and Mouffe's contention that today no central antagonism structures social space. Among the struggles for social justice today, for example, no hierarchy prevails; no single struggle provides the key to the others, nor is there any necessary connection among them. We participate in an indefinite number of discursive communities, which may overlap and contradict one another. Slavoj Žižek relates Laclau and Mouffe's thesis that "society does not exist" to the paradoxical nature of the Lacanian Real as elaborated in Lacan's later work. The Real is both prior to the process of symbolization and the residue, the undigested scrap, that remains after symbolization. It is an unknowable X, which can only be constructed in retrospect, through its effects. Like the Real, which resists symbolization, antagonisms cannot be represented: "society is always traversed by an antagonistic split which cannot be integrated into symbolic order."<sup>2</sup> The class struggle, for example, "is present only in its effects."<sup>3</sup> Thus society is "impossible"—it does not exist as a closed totality that could be fully signified.<sup>4</sup> How does discourse about music register this impossibility—this paradoxical logic of the social? I have already spoken, of course, about a crisis in musical discourse, of impasses that result when different factions are alienated from each other's values. Here I wish to consider how such impasses not only characterize relations among rival factions but may even arise within individuals, who are faced with opposing discourses that simultaneously resist yet demand integration, with conflicting sources of identity that cannot, yet somehow must, be reconciled.

From the perspective of discourse, of language considered as intersubjective communication, social antagonisms can be experienced as alienation from one's own language. The force that antagonizes me, that prevents me from being self-identical, also destabilizes my language and makes me aware of its contingency. Here I find it illuminating to juxtapose Laclau and Mouffe's work with the insights of Mikhail Bakhtin. For Bakhtin, national languages are never unitary but are socially stratified through "heteroglossia." Within any language, a variety of social voices compete: professional jargons, the slang of various age groups, the languages of sports, of religion, of the military, and so on. Such languages are concrete worldviews

rather than linguistic abstractions. In relatively homogeneous cultures, however, the conflicts among such languages can be kept at bay. Bakhtin cites the case of a mythical Russian peasant who “prayed to God in one language (Church Slavonic), sang songs in another, spoke to his family in a third and, when he began to dictate petitions to the local authorities through a scribe, he tried speaking yet a fourth language (the official-literate language, ‘paper’ language)” yet who keeps these languages in separate mental compartments, shifting from one to another without thinking.<sup>5</sup> In other periods, however, the boundaries between language systems become porous, the cultural perspectives that each represents collide, and the languages can illuminate and criticize each other. This is certainly the case today. In such circumstances, when language no longer seems natural, inevitable, or predetermined, “consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language*.”<sup>6</sup> Although Bakhtin views this loss of an authoritative language as an occasion for optimism, it can also generate anxiety or even paralysis.

Within musical research, the sense of questioning one’s own language and value systems may have emerged among ethnomusicologists first, who can claim a certain priority in facing the complexities of our cultural situation. Ethnomusicology allied itself with anthropology at a critical moment, a time that Clifford Geertz calls a “crisis in ethnographic writing.”<sup>7</sup> Since anthropology developed primarily during the colonial era, the end of colonialism transformed the conditions of ethnographic study:

One of the major assumptions upon which anthropological writing rested until only yesterday, that its subjects and its audience were not only separable but morally disconnected, that the first were to be described but not addressed, the second informed but not implicated, has fairly well dissolved.<sup>8</sup>

Ethnomusicology inherited the resulting crisis of legitimation and all its attendant ethical dilemmas, so admirably summarized by Kay Kaufman Shelemay.<sup>9</sup> When dominated cultures began to talk back, asserting the right to speak for themselves, the traditional rhetoric of anthropology no longer seemed persuasive. A heightened self-consciousness about language and method emerged. Geertz even suggests that this self-consciousness can produce a kind of “moral hypochondria.”<sup>10</sup> But the reflexive anthropologist is no *malade imaginaire*. In this conflict of language systems there may be no definitive resolution of ethical and epistemological questions because the terms of the conflicts are constantly changing. When the Other’s language system begins to challenge mine, the Other’s language is also changed by the encounter, since neither of us exists as a full positivity. How can musical research adapt to situations that are permanently unstable, where no final resolution exists?

In this chapter I will present a series of case studies, based on close read-

ings of recent musical discourse, in which it is productive to regard the antagonisms of the postmodern social as providing a set of boundary conditions. Several of these are taken from ethnomusicology, because it is here that the effects of social antagonisms are most explicitly felt. Yet such antagonisms may also register in what Fredric Jameson calls “the political unconscious” of texts, at the level where texts can be regarded as “socially symbolic acts.”<sup>11</sup> Thus I have decided to close the chapter with a case study drawn from music theory. Even the most technical music theory, which the more literal-minded might characterize as formalist exercises, may well reveal the same social tensions that are dealt with more overtly in, say, ethnomusicology. In speaking here of enabling conditions, I do not mean to suggest that social antagonisms determine what is said in musical discourse, because one can respond to them in various ways. They might, for example, provide a source of creative tension. Or one might effectively disavow them, keeping them in separate mental boxes, rather like Bakhtin’s hypothetical Russian peasant. In what I have called the Tower of Babel, something like this happens: each faction behaves as if it possesses an authoritative language. The rhetorical violence that is expressed in such situations may itself be an index of social antagonisms, reflecting an anxiety that one’s language is, in fact, contingent.

## II

Consider the dilemma that Philip V. Bohlman describes in his provocative and impassioned essay “Musicology as a Political Act.”<sup>12</sup> How should Western musicology deal with Islamic chant, with the recitation of the *Qurān*? Bohlman raises this issue in connection with a critique of essentialism in musical scholarship and the resulting tendency to depoliticize music. He protests “the seemingly innocent and generous claim that ‘all cultures have music.’” To Bohlman, the globalization of “music” is a form of relativism, which can be used to treat all cultures with the same methods and establish facile equations between a culture and its music. In stark contrast to this trend, Bohlman asserts that “in Islamic thought, music has no place” (p. 427). He immediately acknowledges the apparent absurdity of this statement from a Western perspective, since “the fundamental text of Islam, the *Qurān*, sounds like music when recited” (p. 427). This cantillation is a form of spiritual communion, not “art”; as part of a way of life, it must be lived rather than listened to. Yet Bohlman realizes that an essentializing attitude is not so easy to shake off: “Even the rhetoric that I have drawn upon here to situate recitation in relation to a wide array of Western musical concepts demonstrates the extent to which I am trapped in this essentializing rhetoric myself” (p. 428). Bohlman, then, locates Islamic chant in a paradoxical zone: it is not music, yet it is an object for ethnomusicology; it is not an object for aesthetic contemplation, it must not be listened to as music, yet he

admits that “my colonial self cannot help but say that, when I listen to quranic recitation, I find the beauty staggering” (p. 429). The disciplinary object is characterized by a fundamental split, producing a corresponding split in the *subject*. Bohlman writes with a keen awareness of a division between his “colonial self” and his postcolonial consciousness:

By reifying the beauty of the *Qurān* I have controlled and disciplined ‘the music,’ and I have transformed it into an aesthetic object for my aural surveillance, but I regret to say, I have come no closer to understanding meaning or spiritual intensity in Islamic thought, which is one of the fundamental powers recitation lends to the *Qurān*. (p. 429)

How then, can scholarship do justice to Islamic chant when even listening to it as music risks violating it? Bohlman’s dilemma recalls the problem that Lyotard poses in *The Differend*, the problem of how to be just when faced with irreducible conflicts among language games.<sup>13</sup> Lyotard coined this term to describe radical disputes that defy normal litigation because the parties speak radically different languages; any attempt to judge the case would actually prejudge it by saying it in one or another language. Although such conflicts have always existed, in a multicultural world they arise more frequently, since one can no longer take the values of a dominant culture for granted.

In his discussion of Werner Herzog’s film *Where Green Ants Dream*, Bill Readings shows how such conflicts arise. The film dramatizes a dispute between Australian miners and aborigines over the same piece of land, which the aborigines claim as sacred ground where holy objects are buried. When asked to exhume the relics to authenticate their claim, however, the aborigines refuse, because viewing the numinous objects would bring death. Normal litigation might resolve such cases through compromise, but this only works if both parties agree to play the capitalist language game in which things as different as land and money become exchangeable. The aborigines, however, are not seeking financial compensation. Readings concludes that this is more than a conflict over property rights: “this is not simply a dispute over who owns the land; the nature of ‘property’ as such is the locus of a differend.”<sup>14</sup>

Although Bohlman does not invoke Lyotard, his awareness of the complexities of doing justice to Islamic recitation raises the same issues explored in *The Differend*. The case recalls Herzog’s film: like the sacred objects that must not be exhumed, Islamic chant must not be exposed to the Western gaze. There is a differend: it is not a dispute over aesthetic values but a radical disagreement over the value of the aesthetic, a conflict between language games that pits the “spiritual intensity” of Islamic experience against the aesthetic and analytical attitudes of Western musicology, a conflict so radical that key words in one language—“music,” for example—may not even

exist in the other (Bohlman stresses that words like *mūsīqū* and *mūsīqi* are foreign loan words, which “mark and emblemize foreignness” [p. 428]).

Traditional scholarship is aware of the problem that Bohlman describes but chooses to bracket it and to compartmentalize this knowledge, rather like Bakhtin’s mythical peasant. One could imagine a traditional musicologist reasoning as follows: “Of course, the Islamic worshiper neither regards this as music in our sense nor listens to it for pleasure. For our purposes, however, we can disregard this and consider these chants as musical works of art, analyzing them, comparing them, classifying them, and even finding them a source of refined pleasure.” This statement repeats the classic ideological gesture of thinking “I know very well, but nevertheless . . .” (“I know very well that Islamic recitation is not music in the Western sense, but nevertheless I will act as if it is”). The radical and traumatic split in musical research—in this case the antagonism, the breach in Western identity that is opened by its confrontation with Islam—is denied. As Žižek points out, ideological fantasy is “a necessary counterpart to the concept of antagonism: fantasy is precisely the way the antagonistic fissure is masked.”<sup>15</sup> Since society is “impossible,” ideology creates the fantasy of an organic social whole. Similarly, “‘music’ does not exist,” but the field can only sustain its identity by believing it does.

Bohlman vehemently rejects any sort of compromise, resisting any attempt to litigate the dispute between the claims of Western musicology and those of Islam. In rejecting this attitude, however, he also rejects the opposite strategy of saying that we must leave this recitation alone; he does not counsel a retreat into silence. On the contrary: we must somehow engage this music (which isn’t “music”); we must study it precisely because of the differend. The singularity of this chanting, its resistance to our categories, must be preserved. Bohlman is keenly aware of this tension, this paradox, yet I am not sure he has any clear idea of how this tension is to be sustained or whether he has reached the sort of “impossible” solution that Readings finds in Herzog’s film, where “two languages become impossibly co-present.”

What are the historical conditions of possibility for the emergence of Bohlman’s position, for his paradoxical construction of Islamic recitation? A good place to start is the antagonism between global capital and local cultures. “Tolerance for diversity” depends on a global system of exchangeability in which cultural differences become marketable commodities. As the preservation of traditions comes to depend on a tourist economy and the marketing of cultural signs, local cultures become simulacra of themselves. One sees this, for example, in the case of the Kaluli people. Steven Feld has shown how their music has become a tourist attraction; they perform their music in shorter versions, at government command, and so on.<sup>16</sup> The knowledge of local cultures becomes a commodity as well and can be bought and sold within the academic marketplace of the managed university. The world has become abstractly unified, but each culture becomes

sealed off and self-referential. Against this abstraction Bohlman seems to advocate the paradox of a *local absolute*; instead of being abstractly comparable through a common language (“all cultures have music”), each is absolute, not exchangeable with any other. When I speak of this global/local dialectic as an enabling condition for Bohlman’s approach, I do not mean that it determines his thought; many other reactions to this dialectic would be possible. Bohlman reacts against the abstract unification of culture, but it would also be possible to embrace it.

The irreducible tension in Bohlman’s stance becomes evident if we consider it in light of Slavoj Žižek’s analysis of postmodernism. According to Žižek, postmodernism involves an ambiguous relationship to what Lacanian theory calls “the Thing,” that is, repressed *jouissance*. While modernism tries to disavow the Thing, to leave it behind—as the Enlightenment, for example, sought to exterminate the traces of pre-Enlightenment superstition and irrationality in favor of a radical new beginning, a New Man—postmodernism renounces “the modernist utopia . . . [accepting] that freedom is possible only on the basis of a certain fundamental ‘alienation.’”<sup>17</sup> If modernism excludes the Thing, postmodernism recognizes that it is an *internal* exclusion; to use one of Lacan’s neologisms, it is an *extimate* object: “we enter postmodernism when our relationship to the Thing becomes *antagonistic*: we abjure and disown the Thing, yet it exerts an irresistible power on us.”<sup>18</sup> From this perspective, it is productive to regard Bohlman’s “colonial self” as the Thing, the traumatic object-in-subject, the lethal alien within. Instead of advocating a modernist rupture with the past, he recognizes that the traumatic history of colonialism cannot simply be forgotten; however much we may repudiate it, it continues to produce effects. Any progress depends on a symbiotic relation to the Thing: the colonial subject is a condition of possibility for the postcolonial subject to appear at all. Since identity is defined relationally and negatively in the postmodern, the postcolonial subject has no positive identity; it exists only as the negation of its shadow, the colonial self. Thus there is no “pure” or authentic postcolonial attitude, no authentic language in which to study Islamic chant. It would be naive, therefore, to expect to recover an authoritative language or to heal the splits in identity. All we can do is substitute a conscious and deliberate alienation from our own language for the unconscious and disavowed alienation that prevails today.

### III

Since antagonisms are divisions in social space that cannot be fully symbolized, that prevent social agents from coinciding with themselves, their existence can produce a crisis of cultural representation: how can one discursively represent a particular social group if social antagonisms cannot be represented, when there is no stable position from which to write? In



"Miriam Sings Her Song: Self and Other in Anthropological Discourse," Ellen Koskoff encounters these problems.<sup>19</sup> She stages a conflict between her identity as a Western, liberal feminist, her identity as a reflexive ethnographer who recognizes the power differences in writing about another culture, and the voices of the subjects of her investigation. In her extensive fieldwork as a participant-observer working with a community of Hasidic Jews (Lubavitchers) living in Brooklyn, she encountered a patriarchal society in which women would seem, at least from a Western feminist perspective, to be oppressed and silenced, both in terms of their social roles and in their relationship to music. Among the Lubavitchers, the sound of a woman's voice is considered potentially dangerous, a source of erotic fascination; the laws of *kol isha* (the voice of a woman) prohibit men from listening to women sing, with the exception of their own wives and premenstrual daughters. Indeed, Koskoff observes that in practice, "married women almost never sing in the presence of their husbands" lest they be accidentally overheard by male neighbors or relatives. In calling this situation oppressive, however, a nest of related questions opens up: Are we imposing Western secular values onto another culture and thus failing to respect its differences from ours? On the other hand, are we yielding to a cultural relativism if we fail to condemn practices that violate human rights? Or might even the concept of universal human rights be regarded as a Western invention? And what about the voices of the women themselves: How do Lubavitcher women experience their position in society from an insider perspective?

To tackle such questions, Koskoff writes from a series of alternative viewpoints, which she labels "Perspective 1," "Perspective 2," and "Perspective 3." In the first of these, which she calls "The Describer, Looking In," she takes the position of a descriptive ethnographer, adopting a neutral position from which to examine a culture. In the second perspective, "The Analyst, Looking In," she acts as an analytic ethnographer, a theoretical perspective that "often attempts to expose and change systems that oppress or dominate" (p. 149). In the third perspective, "Miriam, Looking Out," she takes the side of one of her informants, allowing Miriam to respond to the descriptions that have been offered by outsiders. In a fourth, synthesizing section, "Out and In Together," Koskoff reflects on the power dynamics affecting the conditions of cultural study. Thus Koskoff could be described as an ironic thinker, if we use that term in Hayden White's extended sense. As a trope, irony involves saying one thing and meaning another; in White's inflation of the traditional rhetorical tropes, irony sanctions multiple viewpoints on reality. In irony, we become aware of "the capacity not only to say things about the world in a particular way but also to say things about it in alternative ways—and of reflecting on this capacity of thought (or language . . .) to say one thing and mean another or to mean one thing and say it in a host of alternative, even mutually exclusive or illogical ways."<sup>20</sup> Thus we have an ironic multiplication of selves in Koskoff's play of perspec-



tives, a dispersion of identity in which the unity of subject positions, or the reconciliation of points of view, is indefinitely deferred.

From the analytic perspective, Koskoff argues that “women have been effectively silenced” (p. 156). She analyzes various hierarchical divisions in Lubavitcher society, not only between men and women but between married and unmarried women and between those who have been Lubavitchers from birth and those who are returnees to Orthodox Judaism. Within this hierarchy, the unmarried Ba'alot Teshuvah (female returnees to Orthodox Judaism) occupy the lowest rank, yet their involvement with music seems to be the most intense of any group of women.

It is no coincidence that unmarried Ba'alot Teshuvah tend to be the most active musically and the most adventurous concerning their musical practices, often singing under their breath during the Rebbe's *farbrengens* or religious services, composing their own tunes, calling their own *farbrengens*, and, at times, listening to current popular music. Thus it appears that the status hierarchy for women is in inverse proportion to their musical activity. Women in the most valued social and religious position, achieved through “correct” origins and marriage, tend to have the least active connection to music. (p. 157)

Momentarily adopting a Marxist perspective, Koskoff suggests that the older, lifetime Lubavitcher males, who are the dominant group within their community, exploit the Ba'alot Teshuvah, controlling, “through their ideology of spirituality—the fruit of their true labor—their children” (p. 158).

Yet this critical position is followed by a section that takes the side of “Miriam,” one of Koskoff's informants, who takes issue with the way her culture has been described from an outside perspective. Not only do many members of the Lubavitcher community reject her analysis of their status hierarchy and gender roles, but Miriam argues that “*kol isha* protects them, not only against prohibited men, but also against their own sexual power” (p. 159).

The problems that Koskoff encounters here result from the social antagonisms with which she deals. The divisions in social space here are not simply the partitions between Lubavitcher culture and Western secular values; these divisions constitute the identities of the participants. In the conflict between Hasidic patriarchy and Western feminism, we are not dealing with social agents who are first constituted as full positivities and who subsequently encounter each other, since identity in the postmodern is defined negatively and relationally.

#### IV

Having examined cases from the field of ethnomusicology, I turn now to the work of the music theorist David Lewin and his essay “Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception.”<sup>21</sup> Along with developing a formal

model of perception, called the p-model, this article operates in a number of registers; its increasingly self-conscious interrogation of its own premises invites multiple readings. When read from the standpoint of social desire, for example, a number of issues emerge beyond the narrowly technical. By insisting that “a perception—as modeled by the basic formula—*necessarily* involves utterances or gestures of *some kind*” (p. 342), statements in some language L, Lewin reveals a desire to ground perception in a social world; far from being an abstract exercise, the formal model attempts to make the occult processes of perception *public* and thus open to rational discussion. One thinks here of Jürgen Habermas and his ideal of communicative rationality, finding a rational medium for discussion as a means to realize human freedom.<sup>22</sup> Once this aspect of Lewin’s work is recognized, it is not difficult to find hints in Lewin’s text of his awareness of the social conditions under which he writes. Sometimes these conditions are explicitly thematized, as when Lewin concludes the article by lamenting that “our society encourages us to ignore” certain modes of perception (p. 391), or when he says that “our sense of the past, in making perception-statements, is thereby necessarily involved with socio-cultural forces that shaped the language L, and our acquisition of that language” (p. 342). Elsewhere, uncovering the cultural subtexts at work here will require a less literal reading but one that is still grounded in textual details and intertextual relationships. When viewed from the perspective of Jameson’s political unconscious, for example, the p-model could be interpreted as having a repressed social content: in trying to reconcile the often bitterly divisive controversies between theoretical systems and languages through a “meta-methodology” (p. 359), Lewin is attempting to resolve social contradictions at a symbolic level, much as imaginative literature does in Jameson’s account.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the later sections of the article, which subject the p-model to a multi-layered critique, explore types of musical behavior that resist the model and thwart formalization, thus undermining the possibility of a public, rational discourse. In opening a public/private division in musical experience, Lewin seems to share something like the public/private split that Nancy Fraser analyzes in the work of the philosopher Richard Rorty.<sup>24</sup> When the p-model is called into question, the identity of the listener, as it had been constructed in the model, is also called into doubt. As these tensions in Lewin’s text proliferate, any attempt to assimilate it to the routine genres of music theory becomes increasingly strained; certainly the impression of theoretical formalism that a superficial reading might encourage is called into question. In its restless agitation, its double binds, and its self-consciousness, it belongs thoroughly to our time, to our era of social antagonisms; it lives in the present. Or so I shall argue.

Before exploring these themes, however, I must do quite a bit of preliminary work to explain the details of Lewin’s model. The p-model tries to account for a certain density of temporal experience that may be suppressed in conventional music analysis. Traditional theories may force us to choose

between competing explanations, forcing us to deny or invalidate our own perceptions—to “bad-mouth” them, as Lewin puts it. Lewin attributes this problem, in part, to the tyranny of Euclidean spatial models; since two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time, we often assume that two perceptions cannot coexist. By arguing that different perceptions occupy different phenomenological spaces, Lewin hopes to surmount these false dichotomies. Even the denial of a previous perception is itself a perception and can be represented in Lewin’s model. The model is meant to describe these phenomenological spaces with a fair degree of formal rigor.

Husserl’s phenomenology provides a point of departure for Lewin, in particular the triadic schema for time-consciousness. In this schema, temporal awareness involves not only the primary impression we are receiving at any given moment but also what Husserl calls “retentions,” that is, residues of previous impressions, and “protensions,” or anticipations of the future. This schema is considerably complicated by the fact that we can have retentions of previous retentions, and retentions of retentions of retentions, and so on. Lewin appropriates this idea to suggest intricate interdependencies among perceptions. A given perception might confirm, deny, reinforce, or otherwise relate to other perceptions.

After defining the general issues at stake, Lewin puts the model to work in a very detailed analysis of “Morgengruß,” from Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin*. Lewin’s metamethodology is perhaps best explained by looking at this analysis. (In table 7.1 and ex. 7.1 I have reproduced two of Lewin’s illustrations; ex. 7.2 provides the Schubert passage under discussion.) In table 7.1, each perception is labeled with a subscript:  $p_1$ ,  $p_2$ ,  $p_{3a}$ ,  $p_{3b}$ , and so on. The table also includes columns labeled EV[ent] and C[onte]XT. Thus  $p_1$  is the event of measure 12 seen within the context of measure 12 alone, while  $p_2$  is the same event seen within a broader context of measures 9–12. Another layer of context is addressed in Lewin’s text although not identified in this chart: the context of tonal theory. The p-model aims to accommodate not only different hearings of the same events but also the different historically conditioned theoretical languages that might authorize particular hearings. Thus one might have a perception of a Schenkerian *Ursatz* or a Rameauvian *basse fondamentale*. The p-model is omnivorous with respect to the history of music theory. It can digest and assimilate all previous theoretical models; it is a machine that can run on any fuel.

The “Selected Statements” column in table 7.1 refers us to example 7.1. The ingenuity of Lewin’s model quickly becomes apparent when we examine measures 12–15 of the song at the words “Verdriesst dich denn mein Gruß so schwer?” (ex. 7.2). Example 7.1.1 shows the event of measure 12 in the context of measure 12; the analysis shows only a G minor chord in first inversion, since the context is too limited to suggest a more definite interpretation. Example 7.1.2 situates this event in a wider context, now interpreting the event as a minor dominant in C major with a question mark. Ex-

Table 7.1. David Lewin's Phenomenological Analysis of a Passage from "Morgengruß"

p	EV	CXT	Selected P-R pairs	Selected SStatements
p <sub>1</sub>	mI2	mI2		Ex. 7.1.1
P <sub>2</sub>	mI2	m9-I2	(p <sub>1</sub> ,terminal inclusion) (V-percept,questioning)	Ex. 7.1.2
p <sub>3a</sub>	mI2-I3	mI2-I3	(p <sub>1</sub> ,incipital inclusion (P <sub>4</sub> ,implication)	Ex. 7.1.3
p <sub>3b</sub>	mI2-I3	m9-I3	(p <sub>2</sub> ,denial) (P <sub>3a</sub> ,reinforcement)	Ex. 7.1.3
p <sub>4</sub>	mI2-I3	mI2-I3 plus expected mI4	(p <sub>3a</sub> ,realization) (earlier d tonicization, elaboration)	Ex. 7.1.4
p <sub>5</sub>	m9-I3	m9-I3 plus expected continuation	(p <sub>4</sub> ,medial inclusion), (p <sub>4</sub> ,reinforcement) (p <sub>3b</sub> ,reinforcement), (p <sub>2</sub> ,virtual annihilation)	Ex. 7.1.5
p <sub>6a</sub>	mI4	mI2-I4	(p <sub>4</sub> ,confirmation and elaboration) (P <sub>6b</sub> ,implication)	Ex. 7.1.6
p <sub>6b</sub>	mI4	mI2-I4 plus expected mI5 (in d minor)	(p <sub>6a</sub> ,realization), (p <sub>7a</sub> ,modification)	As in the commentary
p <sub>7a</sub>	mI4	mI2-I4 plus expected mI5 (seq.)	(p <sub>6b</sub> ,modification), (p <sub>3a</sub> ,sequential expansion)	Ex. 7.1.7
P <sub>7b</sub>	mI4-I5	mI2-I5	(p <sub>7a</sub> ,confirmation), (p <sub>6b</sub> ,denial) (P <sub>5</sub> ,confirmation (via p <sub>6a</sub> ))	As in the commentary
p <sub>8</sub>	mI4-I5	m9-I5	A <sup>b</sup> -G in bass of m9, expanded Recapitulation), (p <sub>9</sub> ,support)	Ex. 7.1.8
p <sub>9</sub>	m9-I5	m9-I5 plus expected mI6	(p <sub>2</sub> ,confirmation), (p <sub>3b</sub> ,denial) (p <sub>8</sub> ,support), (p <sub>5</sub> ,qualification)	Ex. 7.1.9

Source: David Lewin, "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception," *Music Perception* 3/4 (Summer 1986): p. 345, fig. 7.

ample 7.1.3 begins to play with the possibility of hearing this, along with the next chord, as a iv<sup>6</sup>-V progression in D minor. Thus, returning to table 7.1 and looking at the "Selected P-R [Perception-Relations] Pairs," we can see that p<sub>3b</sub> is in a relationship of denial with p<sub>2</sub> and a relationship of reinforcement with p<sub>3a</sub>. That is to say, the interpretation shown in example 7.1.2 of a minor dominant is denied by the arrival of the A major chord. Lewin observes that

(7.1.1) (7.1.2) (7.1.3) (7.1.4)

g<sup>6</sup> C: V<sup>6</sup> b?! d: iv<sup>6</sup> V d: iv<sup>6</sup> V i

(not C: V<sup>6</sup>!)

(7.1.5) (7.1.6)

C: V<sup>(7)</sup> ii V<sup>(7)</sup> d: iv<sup>6</sup> V i i<sup>7</sup> i<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub>

(7.1.7) (7.1.8)

d: iv<sup>6</sup> V ? c: iv<sup>6</sup> V

Verdriesst Verstört  
dich denn mein dich denn mein

(7.1.9)

C: V<sup>(7-)</sup> (I(-3))

Example 7.1. David Lewin's interpretation of Schubert's "Morgengruß." From Lewin, "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception," *Music Perception* 3/4 (Summer 1986): 346.

(Mäßig)

Ver - driesst dich denn mein Gruß so schwer? ver - stört dich denn mein Blick so sehr?

pp

Example 7.2. Schubert, "Morgengruß," mm. 12–15.

the things I am pretending to notice . . . “in measure 12,” are not features of “measure 12” at all; they are rather matters that involve how what-I-notice-in-measure-12 engages in Perception-Relations with what-I-notice-elsewhere, all wrapped up in broader ConteXTs. Our model enables me to be very precise and formal about these matters.” (p. 347)

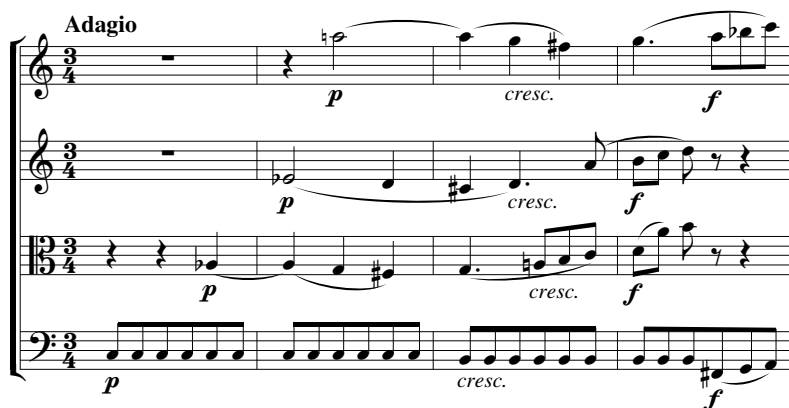
By providing a rational medium for discussion, Lewin does not side with or against any particular viewpoint; instead, he wants to specify the context and level at which a particular method applies. It is not difficult to see this as a symbolic resolution of social contradictions. Indeed, by looking at the model in these terms, certain details of language take on a new meaning, such as Lewin’s decision to represent the false dichotomies of music theory through what he calls a “‘political/legal’ table” (p. 357). The table shows a dialectic between a “Democrat/plaintiff” and a “Republican/defendant” (p. 358). Lewin comments:

I have called my false dichotomies political/legal because they force us into the position of voting for a slate of candidates, or of rendering verdicts in adversary judicial proceedings, as we respond to music. I find this not just wrong but fantastically wrong. . . . The false dichotomies run head-on against my meta-rules, and I find the phenomenology of the model an attractive way to avoid the dichotomies without abandoning rational discourse. (pp. 359–60)

The issue of “Who is the listener?” is one that troubles Lewin throughout. His model constructs an identity for the listener that is far more complex than the subject positions offered by the political/legal dichotomies. To find out more about this listener, however, and the sort of cultural work it does, we need to examine the historical background to Lewin’s model. Certainly Lewin’s own historical awareness, his recognition of the “socio-cultural forces that shaped the language L, and our acquisition of that language” (p. 342), invites us to historicize his metamethodology.

The most important antecedent to Lewin’s article is not one that he acknowledges or reflects on, although it is one with which he is certainly familiar. Gottfried Weber, working in the early 1800s, anticipated Lewin’s work in an uncanny fashion. Reading Lewin and Weber intertextually may open up new aspects of their work. I want to examine Weber’s analysis of the opening of Mozart’s String Quartet in C Major, K. 465/I, the “Dissonant” (ex. 7.3 provides the score; ex. 7.4 extracts from Weber’s analysis). This analysis was originally published in the journal *Cäcilia* in 1831 and was reprinted in 1832 in the third edition of Weber’s *Versuch einer geordneten Theorie der Tonsetzkunst*. Although Weber’s analysis is often mentioned as one of the earliest detailed music analyses, its connection to Lewin’s work seems to have escaped detection.<sup>25</sup>

The basis of Weber’s analysis is his principle of *Mehrdeutigkeit*, which can be translated as “ambiguity” or “multiple meaning.” The initial C is not



Example 7.3. Mozart, String Quartet, K. 465 ("Dissonant"), I, mm. 1-4.

given a multiple interpretation, however, because of Weber's principle of inertia, which constitutes a sort of Occam's razor, asserting that the ear will seek the simplest possible explanation. Normally the principle of inertia works to curb the promiscuity of *Mehrdeutigkeit*, but here ambiguities set in by the third quarter note (see ex. 7.4). The  $A\flat$  is ambiguous; it could be heard either as an  $A\flat$  or  $G\sharp$ . The  $G\sharp$  inspires Weber to compose a hypothetical continuation (ex. 7.4a). The interval  $A\flat$  to C is also susceptible to multiple interpretations because of its incompleteness as a triad. It could belong to either an  $A\flat$  major or an F minor triad. Weber then suggests three possible tonal contexts for this interval: it could continue the C minor tonality that he assumed at the beginning, but it could equally represent  $A\flat$  major or F minor (ex. 7.4b). As Weber's analysis proceeds, no sooner is one ambigu-

(a)

(b)

Harmony:  $A\flat$   
c: VI  
 $A\flat$ : I

Harmony: f  
c: iv  
f: i

Example 7.4. From Gottfried Weber, *Versuch einer geordneten Theorie der Tonsetzkunst*, 3rd ed. (Mainz, 1832), vol. 3, 204.

ity put to rest than others appear. Weber's analysis goes on for about thirty pages and never gets past the first four bars. All of this could easily be translated into Lewin's terminology. We could say that Weber's musical examples are the Selected S<sup>T</sup>atements. The perception of a C minor tonality on beat 3 could be said to reinforce the perception of beats 1 and 2 as tonic, while the perception of A<sup>b</sup> major denies that interpretation, and so on.

Weber's work is not concerned with the piece as an organic whole. Rather he shifts the burden of analysis from the musical object to the subject, examining the listener's perceptions and shifting states of awareness, for which the piece is the occasion. Thus Weber's analysis is phenomenological, and his relationship with Lewin involves not only the issue of multiple interpretations but also the issue of phenomenology, even if Weber did not use that term.

This preliminary comparison gives us a new context for interpretation, one that will allow us to understand Lewin's construction of the listening subject. How does Weber construct the listener? How does his analysis represent the human subject? I suggest that it is constructed as a romantic ironist. The listener occupies the dizzying variety of subject positions that we associate with romantic irony. I am thinking in particular of writers such as Friedrich Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, and Jean Paul. In their works we frequently encounter characters who change from one moment to the next, changing personae with the weather, tearing off one mask after another. In *The Concept of Irony*, Søren Kierkegaard offers the following description of the romantic ironists:

But as the ironist has no continuity, so the most contrary feelings are allowed to displace each other. Now he is a god, now a grain of sand. His feelings are as accidental as the incarnations of the Brahma . . . at one moment he is absolutely certain, at the next he conducts further inquiries, now he is a dogmatist, now a doubter, now it is Jacob Böhme who excites him, now the Greeks, etc., sheer feeling.<sup>26</sup>

This theme of infinite romantic subjectivity, with its absolute mutability, underlies Weber's Mozart analysis. Recognizing this allows us to station Weber in a larger cultural context. One moment the listener is in a state of complete tonal certainty, the next she or he is faced with the most various possibilities. Thus hearing the third beat as a G<sup>#</sup> threatens to propel the listener into the most dreary tonal future, toward a C major cadence as hackneyed as those in Weber's own compositions (ex. 7.4a). The subject is in a state of uncertainty, longing, suspense . . .

Lewin's listening subject, I submit, also lives in ironic mode, constantly aware of the possibility of multiple redescriptions of its own experience. The governing trope in both Lewin and Weber is that of irony in Hayden White's extended sense. Irony is self-reflexive, reflecting "on the constructivist nature of the ordering principle itself."<sup>27</sup> The changing masks and perspec-



tives of the romantic ironist are not difficult to detect in Lewin's essay, especially with respect to his use of earlier theories. Lewin's listener is Schenker one moment, positing a Schenkerian *Ursatz*; at the next moment he or she becomes Rameau, perceiving a fundamental bass, or Hugo Riemann, or Eugene Narmour, or Leonard Meyer, or . . . .

By formalizing what is intuitive in Weber, however, Lewin tries to tame this romantic subject, to force it to submit to rational discussion, so that there are discontinuities as well as continuities with Weber. In terms of Lacan's distinction between Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real, the p-model belongs to the Symbolic. Although the Symbolic is often confused with language in general, language also has Imaginary and Real aspects. The Symbolic is language considered as law and system, as the social and linguistic order of society. In the Symbolic, substitutions can be made on the basis of the signifier; this is what Lewin does with his model. Musical perceptions are submitted to a common code, systematized, so that perceptions associated with different theoretical methods become amenable to rational discussion.

Yet something disrupts the smooth functioning of this symbolic machine. Here is Lewin, reflecting on the limitations of his p-model:

[S]ince "music" is something you *do*, and not just something you *perceive* (or understand), a theory of music can not be developed fully from a theory of musical perception (with or without an ancillary dialectic). At least so I maintain.

Actually, I am not very sure what a "theory of music" might be, or even a "theory of modern Western art-music," but so far as I can imagine one (of either) that includes a theory of musical perception, I imagine it including the broader study of what we call people's "musical behavior," a category that includes competent listening to be sure, but also competent production and performance. Here I understand production and performance not only in the sense of high art but also as manifest in everyday acts of musical "noodling," and in a whole spectrum of intermediate activities. Under the rubric of noodling I include rhythmic gestures, conscious or unconscious, like patterns of walking, finger-drumming, or nervous scratching; I also include singing, whistling, or humming bits of familiar or invented tunes, or variations on familiar tunes; I also include timbral productions like twanging metal objects, knocking on wooden ones, making vocal or other bodily sounds without pitched fundamentals or direct phonemic significance, blowing on conch-shells, through hose-pipes, through blades of grass, and so on. (pp. 377–78)

We could extend this list of "noodling" to include a Rabelaisian catalog of bodily noises: snorting, sniffing, sneezing, belching, wheezing, farting, Bronx cheers, and so on. I am not being flippant: what emerges here in Lewin's text is the body, the Real body in all its noise and disorder. Here the p-model encounters a limit, because the Real is outside discourse; once you

say anything about it, you enter the Symbolic. While the rhythm of “finger-drumming or nervous scratching” might be notated and thus communicated, its particular tactile feel cannot be. In acknowledging that music is not addressed to a homunculus in the brain, that it does not target a disembodied ear, Lewin introduces an intimate, private sphere that resists the communicative rationality for which the first half of his article strives. The world of the p-model is a shared world, because it can be named, spoken, talked about. The world of the noodling, thrumming, noisy body is a private realm of *jouissance*. The possibility of a theoretically consistent, homogeneous metalanguage is undermined by something radically heterogeneous to language. The radical incommensurability of different languages that we saw in Bohlman and Koskoff appear here as well, and Lewin’s integrity consists in his refusal to suppress these potentially messy factors.

## 8

### ETHICS AND THE POLITICAL IN MUSICAL RESEARCH

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#### I

After the decline of master narratives, when the social consensus that once authorized a certain hierarchy and division of disciplines has collapsed, when the humanities are in crisis, when the managed university, increasingly tied to the global economy, markets knowledge like a commodity, as hostile factions multiply within musical research and rhetorical violence menaces our ever more fragile communities, as professionalization and the ideology of the abstract places us all under surveillance, what shall we do? How shall those committed to musical scholarship continue their work, when the objects of the discipline seem so uncertain, when its traditional mission and goals no longer seem persuasive? What is our responsibility to music now? How can we do justice to music, to ourselves, and to others?

What musical research now needs most urgently is neither another theory of musical structure, nor more ethnographic fieldwork, nor more historical criticism—however valuable such things may be—but rather an ethical transformation that will make us, in the words of Mark Bracher, “more capable of accepting and nurturing otherness” both in ourselves and in others.<sup>1</sup> Such an ethical change is needed to challenge the coercive conditions that prevail when rhetorical violence among factions (the Tower of Babel) coexists with the violent internalization of norms by which individuals police themselves (the Ministry of Truth), when both disagreement and consensus often involve the forcible rejection of difference. At the same time, however, this rethinking of the ethical must be accompanied by a rethinking of the politics of musical research, because ethics will never become a rational calculus that might, in effect, eliminate politics and the effects of power by closing the gap between justice and law. In this spirit, Chantal Mouffe has argued that we must promote “the never-ending interrogation of the political by the ethical.”<sup>2</sup> Since the institutions that support

musical research—universities, schools and departments of music, professional societies, journals, publishers, and so on—not only have their own internal politics but are also connected in complex ways to the political organization of society, we must take responsibility for the political implications of our work. An ethical reformation of values must gain leverage by continually critiquing institutions and questioning their legitimacy.

The vision of community toward which I am moving, however, will not by any means eliminate all differences between factions or produce consensus. This is because pluralism is the inevitable product of democracy. As Claude Lefort has shown, the modern type of democracy represents more than a new form of government; it also constitutes a radical change in symbolic relations, in which people can subscribe to drastically different ideas of the good.<sup>3</sup> Any community today must be what Bill Readings calls a “dis-sensual community” rather than one based on consensus.<sup>4</sup> Yet this does not necessarily condemn us to a condition of fragmentation in which only differences will prevail. Mouffe contends that while pluralism is inevitable, not all differences are desirable, since some are based on oppression. She distinguishes between two forms of social antagonism, antagonism proper and a modification of it that she calls “agonism.” Whereas antagonism divides social space into friend and enemy, “us” versus “them,” agonism involves relations between “adversaries,” who are “friendly enemies.”<sup>5</sup> Mouffe argues that if democracy is to be truly radical and plural, it must strive for agonistic pluralism, in which adversaries “share a common symbolic space” but want to structure it differently.<sup>6</sup>

In musical research the emergence of factions involves antagonism, creating an “us” and a “them”; *we* are Schenkerian theorists and *they* are not, *we* are feminist musicologists and *they* are not, and so on. Moreover, as I hope I have made clear, the oppressive social relations of postmodern life penetrate the very heart of musical research through the commodification of knowledge in the managed university. That is why a critique of academic fields, including music, must participate in the critique of the social. If we are to change musical research we must aim at nothing less than transforming the social imaginary by moving toward a type of pluralism, based on adversarial relations, that would identify and work against types of difference based on coercion, while working to construct a shared symbolic space in which differences would be nonoppressive.

In this final chapter I shall make some practical suggestions for how we might do this, focusing on three areas in which change seems particularly urgent: (1) the process of peer review in professional associations (such as the AMS, SEM, and SMT); (2) the university; and (3) writing about music. Although I shall treat these separately for the sake of clarity, they are all intimately related. By regulating discourse about music through enforcing professional standards, academic organizations mediate between writing about music and the requirements of the university system of tenure and promotion, in which research has become increasingly commodified. To es-

establish a more radical pluralism we must target all three of these as well as the relations between them.

## II

Reevaluating the process of peer review by which professional associations decide who shall have the right to speak at academic conferences must become a priority if we are to achieve a more just community. This process usually involves a sort of representative democracy, in which officers elected by the membership appoint committees to screen conference proposals; these committees act on behalf of all members. As with all democratic institutions, we must not assume that their actions are inherently fair or always produce the best results. The urgency of this topic stems from the consequences of peer review, not only because the exposure that professional societies can provide is an important source of academic prestige but also because this symbolic capital can be translated into real capital through the influence of professional societies on the academic job market. Despite hopes that the internet will provide new avenues for the dissemination of research, access to the sort of public forum that academic organizations provide will never be universal. Although anyone who subscribes to an e-mail network such as the AMS-L electronic discussion group, for example, can contribute to on-line chats, not everyone can have the relative leisure for producing work that an academic position affords or the prestige that professional accolades can bestow. Since these factors influence both the production and the reception of research, in appointing committees to judge the value of scholarship, it is essential to reevaluate the process—to ask: Who will judge the judges?

A potential starting point for critique here is to examine how democratic institutions manage pluralism. According to Mouffe, modern democracy in its various forms involves an irreducible tension, a constitutive paradox, in which two logics, two incompatible “grammars” (using this term in Wittgenstein’s sense), coexist: the tradition of liberalism, involving respect for individual rights and the rule of law, and the tradition of democracy, involving equality and the rule of the people. These two logics are not externally opposed in a static dualism; instead, they “contaminate” each other, “in the sense that once the articulation of the two principles has been effectuated—even in a precarious way—each of them changes the identity of the other.”<sup>7</sup> The constitution of “the people” in democracy always involves exclusions and the establishment of frontiers, since only citizens, those within the *demos*, are equal. While the liberal concept of universal human rights can be used to challenge such exclusions, the concept of human rights has itself been historically variable. Mouffe believes that there is a productive tension between these two principles.

The democratic logic of constituting the people, and inscribing rights and equality into practices, is necessary to subvert the tendency toward abstract universalism in liberal discourse. But the articulation with the liberal logic allows us constantly to challenge—through reference to “humanity” and the polemical use of “human rights”—the forms of exclusion that are necessarily inscribed in the political practice of installing those rights and defining “the people” which is going to rule. . . . No final resolution or equilibrium between these conflicting logics is ever possible, and there can only be temporary, pragmatic, unstable and precarious negotiations of the tension between them.<sup>8</sup>

I suggest that academic organizations today, including those within music, tend to reproduce the democratic paradox through a tension between two conflicting principles that govern their attempts to provide a forum for an ongoing conversation about their disciplines: (1) the (democratic) desire for free and open discussions in which equality among the participants will prevail and (2) the (liberal) desire for tolerance, in which individual differences will be respected. As in society at large, the *demos* must be constituted through exclusions, since the majority of conference proposals are rejected; in this democracy, only experts may participate. The ideal of blind peer review is an attempt to articulate the democratic and liberal principles, to guarantee that exclusions will be based purely on academic grounds and that the only differences that matter are differences in expertise. At the same time, however, the constitution of the peer review group itself is open to liberal challenges, to arguments that exclusions have been made unfairly or that differences have been ignored. But what constitutes difference at any given time, or which differences matter, is subject to debate. As Slavoj Žižek observes, radical social antagonism involves metadifferences, a difference about the nature of differences. In the case of Islam and Christianity, for example, they do not simply disagree; they “disagree about their very disagreement.”<sup>9</sup> Since there is no neutral standpoint from which to represent metadifferences, the liberal and democratic principles can never reach some ideal point of equilibrium.

The history of the participation of women in the AMS illustrates how the liberal principle can be used to challenge exclusions and broaden the base of disciplinary democracy. As Suzanne Cusick shows in a penetrating study, the formation of the AMS in the 1930s involved the forceful exclusion of women. Cusick describes how Ruth Crawford could only eavesdrop in exasperation outside a closed door as a group of men, including her future husband, Charles Seeger, conducted discussions that eventually led to the founding of the AMS.<sup>10</sup> The gradual recognition of women in that organization resulted from liberal challenges to the constitution of the community; the claim that the AMS provided a forum in which any qualified *person* could speak about music, subject only to blind peer review, was unmasked as meaning that any qualified *man* could speak. Under such conditions peer

review had not been blind, since women had been excluded from the circle of peers.

To keep the democratic space of the discipline open, we must provide mechanisms through which such challenges can be recognized. This is especially true today, at a time when professionalization is changing the rules of the academic game. Professionalization has its own strategies for managing pluralism; differences in content are permitted, even celebrated, as long as professional forms are observed. By inverting the relationship between form and content in research, there is the danger, as Bill Readings tirelessly pointed out, that research will become self-referential, because "all the system requires is for activity to take place, and the empty notion of excellence refers to nothing other than the optional input/output in matters of information."<sup>11</sup> Under these conditions, professionalization can produce a *parody* of the liberal tolerance for difference.

This has grave consequences for the formation of peer review committees, because the bureaucratization of academic organizations makes it possible to achieve significant power and visibility through service to the profession alone. Although I do not wish to denigrate the work that goes on in committees on professional development, networking operations, nominating committees, and so on, this proliferation of committees does make it possible to achieve influence independently of one's scholarship. This can lead to cases in which the committees that sit in judgement on conference proposals may be composed of individuals whose own scholarship is of the most conventional sort. This, in turn, can produce a self-perpetuating situation in which people are chosen for such committees because they are visible but are visible because they are chosen.

Here any remedies must be partial, pragmatic, and subject to debate and periodic revision. With these reservations in mind, let me propose some avenues for rethinking the peer review process. Since the presidents of many academic organizations often have broad power to appoint members of committees, we might consider (1) changing the process by which such figures are elected and (2) restricting their power over appointments. I'll start with the election process. It strikes me as unfortunate that one can be elected to such offices without having to take any sort of positions and without having to demonstrate any grasp of the ethical questions involved, for example, in peer review. Often the only information that members have for deciding how to vote is an abstract of the candidate's accomplishments, prepared by a nominating committee. I suggest that it would be healthier for disciplines if candidates were to conduct campaigns, in which they would issue position papers and conduct debates, via the internet or even live, with time being set aside at national conferences for this purpose. Would this generate controversy? Yes. But it might also combat apathy, provoking lively discussions about the future of the field, the nature of peer review, and so on.

There is no guarantee, of course, that such measures would be effective.

Another option to consider, therefore, might be to limit the power over appointments. It is no secret, for example, and a considerable source of resentment, that academic organizations can be vulnerable to a form of political patronage, in which office-holders distribute committee appointments to friends and colleagues. This tendency does not always result from craven motives: it is natural to feel that people from one's alma mater, for example, are more enlightened because they share one's own views, when they may simply share the same prejudices. We might consider, therefore, a sort of prohibition of academic incest to prevent officers from appointing cronies from graduate school, former students, and current colleagues, at least to key committees.

Another possibility might be to form multiple and decentralized program committees to screen conference proposals. Such a measure seems eminently practical, since no program committee can do justice to reading hundreds of proposals. Particularly with more and more work in music tending toward interdisciplinary paradigms, it might be wise to have separate committees for evaluating nontraditional proposals.

### III

To find a perspective from which to critique the university, we must leave our ivory towers to consider the material conditions under which we work, looking not only past our particular disciplinary specialties but also beyond scholarship itself toward a wider world in which academic institutions are embedded. From the start of this book I have insisted that the crisis of musical research cannot be understood in isolation, nor can any potential solutions emerge entirely within the confines of any single field. The phenomenon of the managed university—what Readings calls the University of Excellence—derives from drastic changes in the relationship between education and society. As the global economy blurs national boundaries, the university no longer prepares citizens to assume a cultural identity as members of a nation state. In chapter 1 I examined some consequences of the corporatist model, including the expansion of the administration, the increasing self-referentiality of research, and the streamlining of graduate education. Other effects of the new regime include: downsizing, in which “unproductive” units are eliminated and resources shifted to more “productive” areas; privatization, involving alliances between outside businesses and academic departments, particularly in the sciences; increasing investments in instructional technology; expansion of the number of “managed professionals,” chiefly technical workers; and increasing reliance on adjunct faculty, who have been called the migrant workers of the system, and have neither job security nor benefits.

Through such practices the university fosters antagonisms, pitting the administration, for example, against the faculty, forcing small departments



to compete with large ones in the battle for scarce resources, compelling regular faculty to defend their privileges against adjuncts, and so on. Yet there are opportunities here to turn antagonism into agonism. Rather than casting administrators, for example, in the role of villain in the tragedy of the university's decline, we might humanize them by acknowledging that they are often part of a system they neither created nor fully understand. The faculty must find ways to educate the administration and to form alliances among students, faculty, and administration in working toward change.

Here any effective response must do more than simply obstruct or resist the current system. As Christopher Newfield observes, "we should not just critique, but redefine academic business—that is, we should examine and revise the business model."<sup>12</sup> The leverage for doing so may come from within the business world itself, which is by no means committed to a single model of what constitutes good business. Ironically, the standardization of the managed university along Fordist lines comes at a time when many industries operate in a decentralized environment that stresses worker empowerment and human development. In the debate over the allocation of resources, we should not allow the administration to define what productivity is. Stanley N. Katz points out, for example, that since many occupations will become obsolete in the future and since workers will change careers four or five times, vocational training, often portrayed as a hard-nosed, realistic alternative to the humanities, has now become impractical.<sup>13</sup> An education in the humanities, emphasizing critical thinking, may now be the most practical educational option for students today. Thus the struggle against a corporate mentality must take place on several fronts, not simply negating it but meeting it on its own terms and undermining it from within.

As an example, let's consider instructional technology. For managers, such technology is irresistible, because it allows for quantifiable and relatively predictable outcomes while controlling the independence of the faculty. In their analysis of this topic, Gary Rhoades and Sheila Slaughter observe that "if the ideal institution for faculty is one without students, the ideal college/university for managers is one without permanent faculty, a virtual institution not only without walls but also without a full-time, tenured faculty."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, since such technology has made the university bureaucracy more efficient, enormously accelerating the compilation and analysis of financial data, the administration naturally tends to view it as an unqualified boon; anyone who fails to share their enthusiasm is simply out of step, resisting progress. But if critical thinking is now, to cite Katz once again, the best vocational training, then the narrow tasks of which instructional technology is now capable must not be allowed to define what academic progress is. Such technology does not simply realize previous educational goals; it also redefines those goals, often in terms of efficiency.

But we must do more than merely question the capacity of technology to deliver on promises of educational improvement. We must also question these investments in terms that administrators can understand: money. We

should point out, for example, that although investments in technology are often justified in terms of cost-effectiveness, they often carry hidden costs. Computers, for example, require periodic and expensive upgrades for both hardware and software, while also needing a highly paid support staff of managed professionals; often the expansion of this sector comes at the expense of faculty downsizing. At the University of Michigan where I work, for example, we recently built a media center at a cost of \$50 million, at a time when the humanities are underfunded. Yet in an age of virtual reality, we do not need cavernous buildings to house computers; a more cost-effective alternative might have been to distribute many smaller media facilities—we might call them media unceners—around the campus, using existing spaces. Ironically, after arguing that this building was urgently needed, the administration is now trying to encourage people to use it; apparently the need was not so urgent.

The tenure process is another area where the managerial mentality has imposed a false model, involving top-down control and, too often, quantitative methods of evaluation. According to Stefano Harney and Frederick Moten, tenure committees encourage “worker-against-worker surveillance,” reinforcing hierarchies while fostering a sense of autonomy and control that is illusory, since the final decisions often rest with administrators.<sup>15</sup> Although any change in this system must be gradual, the faculty is not powerless to present alternatives. At most institutions, for example, the faculty participates on search committees that screen candidates for administrative positions. While such committees seldom choose a new dean or president but merely recommend a slate of candidates to those who make the final decision, the faculty does nevertheless have some influence here.

The functions of teaching in the managed university must also be reevaluated. Graduate training, for example, which involves producing new members of the profession, must become more than a mere reproduction of the system. Here we face a double bind: we must teach in ways that challenge and critique the institution, exposing and resisting the tendency toward professionalization, while also preparing students to function in a world in which they must compete with “professionals.” To manage this paradox, we have to adopt a double perspective; as Readings recommends, we must occupy a position that is both inside and outside the institution, neither fully identifying with it nor forgetting that we are part of it. Since music has always had an ambiguous location in the university, never fully legitimate, never quite at home, we might now exploit our marginality and embrace it.

## IV

Since this book has involved the analysis of scholarly discourse, in closing I should like to explore how writing about music might change to reflect a new ethical vision. Academic prose usually exemplifies what Mikhail Bakhtin

calls “monologism,” a term he uses not only to describe certain tendencies in literature but also to characterize a particular ideological position, as well as a mode of consciousness. In a monologic world, everything revolves around the isolated individual, around “the faith in the self sufficiency of a single consciousness.”<sup>16</sup> In such a world, the other is treated as an object, not an independent subject. Under these conditions, “someone else’s idea cannot be represented. It is either assimilated, or polemically repudiated, or ceases to be an idea.”<sup>17</sup> Within musical research, the ideology of the abstract reflects this monologic tendency to objectify the other’s thought and language, to treat the other’s word as something that can be digested and summarized, appropriated or discarded, but not represented in its stubborn particularity, uniqueness, and resistance to paraphrase. We saw this, for example, in chapter 3: Joseph Kerman could only represent Schenker’s position externally and reductively without quoting him or allowing him to speak for himself. But it is as possible to distort someone else’s work through selective quotations as through the absence of quotations.

In contrast to monologism, Bakhtin believes that other types of discourse encourage dialogic relations to another’s word. For Bakhtin, “monologue” and “dialogue” represent the poles of a continuum rather than a static opposition; different discourses can exhibit these tendencies to different degrees. Among authors, Dostoevsky evinces perhaps the most highly developed dialogic sensibility, particularly in the way his characters seem to escape his control, leading independent lives and resisting “any externalizing and finalizing definition” by others.<sup>18</sup> According to Bakhtin, “Dostoevsky was capable of *representing someone else’s idea*, preserving its full capacity to signify as an idea, while at the same time preserving a distance, neither confirming the idea nor merging it with his own expressed ideology.”<sup>19</sup> The unity of Dostoevsky’s novels does not lie on a single plane; there may be several relatively independent “speech centers.”

Such a decentered unity provides a compelling model for those who want to counter the belief that statements about music can be reduced to a representable content. Here we might read Bakhtin with Lacan: for writing to achieve the “reflexivity to the second degree” that Felman finds in psychoanalysis, it must become radically dialogic.<sup>20</sup> Abstract and counter-abstract, position and counterposition, might be interwoven within a single discourse, a discourse that recognizes its partial character and its own contingency, a discourse that fosters critical thinking even at the risk of fostering resistance to itself.

What would this mean in concrete terms—in terms of specific actions we might take to write differently? For one thing, it would involve transforming the standard genres of academic discourse. Academic research in the humanities tends to favor a limited number of genres: the article, the book review, the review-essay, the monograph, and the book; we could also break these down into their parts, which also fall into standard genres, such

as the preface, the acknowledgements, and the footnote. These genres encourage standardization; each produces a set of expectations that is part of a social contract with the audience: each constitutes a potential audience. One of the means through which genres accomplish this is through what Bakhtin calls “addressivity,” that is, the particular relations between speaker and listener that different genres establish.<sup>21</sup> The distance between speaker and listener differs, for example, depending on whether we are dealing with the genre of military commands, the sermon, the lyric poem, and so on. To challenge monologic scholarship, it is not enough to change content, pouring new wine into old bottles; since the form of a genre carries its own content and its own messages, one must change the genres as well, by fostering dialogic relations among genres.

This does not mean simply discarding the traditional genres of scholarship or inventing new ones. Unconventional genres can also tend toward monologism. *Perspectives of New Music*, for example, has published a number of experiments with unconventional modes of musical analysis, some of them in the form of free verse, which seem hermetic and solipsistic. Instead, genres must be brought into contact so that they can provide perspectives on each other. This is what happens in the history of the novel: the novel is an “antigenre” that subsumes and transforms many other genres, so that the social worlds that each genre represents come into contact. Novels have incorporated letters, poems, diaries, plays, sermons, dialogues, and so on; Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* even incorporates literary criticism into the novel by masquerading as a critical edition of a poem with an eccentric commentary.

The potential for a dialogic interanimation of genres already exists within traditional scholarship. As we have seen with Hayden White’s analyses of historical discourse, for example, fictional genres, including comedy, tragedy, romance, and satire, lead a submerged existence within academic books and essays. Because these layers tend to be disavowed, however, their dialogic, subversive potential remains largely unrealized.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have suggested another avenue for dialogic writing. They distinguish between “major” and “minor” languages, using these terms to designate “two usages or functions of language.”<sup>22</sup> Kafka was an author who maintained a minor perspective on a major language, writing in German but with a constant awareness of Czech and Yiddish, and thus without a proprietary attitude toward the German language or literary traditions. This provides another point of reference for writing about music that might promote genuine pluralism: we should strive to achieve a minor perspective on whatever analytical, historical, or critical languages we adopt. This would involve, to begin with, maintaining a distance toward one’s own technical terminology, treating it with a sense of its contingency, writing like minor authors who are “foreigners in their own tongue.”<sup>23</sup>

—Let's begin with some of your recommendations for changing institutions. I wonder whether your suggestions concerning the process of peer review will be accepted, and I'm frankly skeptical about how your ideas about the managed university will be received. Some will find your recommendations naive, others presumptuous: attempting to change something as powerful as the modern university would seem . . . well, quixotic. Who can resist this juggernaut?

—Sure. And I have no illusions about the resistance such ideas might provoke. On the other hand, in reading the analyses of the university by some of the writers cited in this chapter, including Bill Readings, Stanley N. Katz, Gary Rhoades, and Sheila Slaughter, I become more optimistic; they not only represent a widespread dissatisfaction with the status quo that may soon be approaching a critical mass, but they also consider a range of practical solutions that are sometimes remarkably astute in their assessment of political realities. Once we realize that the structure of the modern university is not a monolithic force, but more like a series of improvisations in response to contingent events, we can begin to imagine alternatives. Real disciplinary progress, as Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., observes, means changing "what counts as valuable knowledge,"<sup>24</sup> and that means changing the institutions in which knowledge is all too often a commodity.

—It seems to me that we should be careful about tearing down institutions, because without them there can be no organized study of music.

—It is not a matter of destruction, but of rebuilding, of rethinking institutional frameworks so they might incorporate some ambivalence, some resistance to their own authority. That is one reason why I find Mouffe's work so relevant to my concerns, because this is the sort of problem she tackles in the area of politics.

—Let's consider her suggestion of turning antagonism into agonism by constructing a common symbolic space that the participants want to structure differently. It seems to me that a frequent move throughout your book has been to disclose, often in unexpected ways, that rival factions are already operating in the same conceptual framework without realizing it. In defending the priority of their respective fields of music history and theory, for example, Joseph Kerman and Kofi Agawu share a hierarchical space, but differ only insofar as each inverts the other's hierarchy. Whereas Mouffe speaks of turning antagonism into agonism, however, in this case you seem to heighten the antagonism by finding a complicity between opposing positions, an unconscious collusion.

—Recognizing that complicity can be a prelude to restructuring that space by realizing that the threats to our disciplinary identity are internal rather than external. The relations of hierarchical domination and subordination through which each field wants to make use of the other can be transformed into a new space that I described as a Moebius strip. This does not re-

solve the tensions into a synthesis, but instead reveals a tension within each position, akin to the “two interfering reflexivities” of which Felman speaks, or the “two contaminating logics” in Mouffe.

—It seems to me that the works of Philip Bohlman, Ellen Koskoff, and David Lewin discussed in the previous chapter have a great deal to contribute toward constructing such an agonistic space.

—Yes, I agree. If social antagonisms prevent us from being self-identical, and thus from having a singular perspective or authoritative language for engaging music, we encounter the problem of how to stage these conflicts among identities in discourse. By building a resistance to *themselves* into their own work, Bohlman, Koskoff, and Lewin provide suggestive models for how we might negotiate among different sociocultural languages.

—Throughout this book I’ve had to adjust my expectations and revise my preconceptions. When you mentioned the crisis of master narratives in chapter 1, for example, I thought I was on familiar ground, since references to this crisis have appeared in recent musical research, whether or not they are specifically attributed to Lyotard. Since this reference is often a prelude to espousing some sort of relativism, it immediately aroused certain expectations, and I thought I could predict what you’d do next. But when I discovered that you don’t preach relativism, I was taken aback.

Similarly in chapter 2, when you mentioned Saussure and the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, once again I thought I had seen this stuff before, since this reference is fairly standard in writings on musical semiotics. So I assumed you would advocate musical semiotics as a solution to the problems you diagnosed. I thought you would either argue that music is a language, or that music is not a language, or that you would split the difference between these positions and espouse some sort of compromise or tolerance. But again I was mistaken.

—I want to cut these Gordian knots. Since questions about music always depend on the discursive horizon within which they are framed, it seems far more elegant to ask how a given discourse creates a horizon of intelligibility. Whether or not music is considered a language, there can be no doubt that musical research is not only transmitted through language, but is also embodied in the sort of socially situated forms of life that Wittgenstein called language games. By asking how these games work, and how they are connected to a variety of cultural practices, we can foster communication among them while avoiding certain impasses that we have seen in the field.

—I can see how conceptualizing the discipline in these terms might keep the horizon of the field open and promote the “horizon of dissensus” to which Readings refers. Since defining music is itself a language game, a disciplinary conversation can continue even if there is no agreement concerning the object, even if the question of what counts as music is contested.

—Yes. By thinking of the field as a collection of language games that we play with music, related by the multiple and overlapping networks of similar-

ities and differences that Wittgenstein called “family resemblances,” we can attribute a certain kind of unity to the field without imposing any singular or permanent center. There is no need to limit what music is, to stipulate that it is or is not a language or anything else, or to limit what it might become in the future. And this decentered disciplinary space in which the status of the object remains open might encourage the sort of radical pluralism we have been discussing.

## POSTLUDE

Sighing deeply, Diva No. 23 adjusted the cucumber slices on her eyelids as “Pourquoi me réveiller” played on the Victrola. Suddenly she heard a commotion. It was Thamyras, racing through the chamber, his laughter bouncing off the polished marble walls. “Who dares to disturb our reverie?” she hissed in a stage whisper as she rose up on her fainting couch. “He claims there are no oracles,” said Diva No. 22. “No oracles? Ridiculous! Doesn’t he know that the oracle of Tanis has resided here since the days of Psusennes I, attended by twenty-three divas, twenty-three hourglass-watchers, and twenty-three hermaphrodites?”

Just then Dorothy and Auntie Em appeared. They had flown all the way from Kansas in a balloon to consult the oracle. “It’s true,” said Dorothy, “the oracle herself confirmed it: there are no oracles.” “What shall we do now?” said the diva. “Perhaps it’s time to leave the temple,” said Auntie Em. Meanwhile the record had gotten stuck in a groove; the Victrola was stammering: “réveiller . . . réveiller . . . réveiller.”

One by one, the divas were blowing out their votive candles and departing. The hourglass-watchers and the hermaphrodites were leaving too, some alone, others in small groups. “What will we do out in the world?” asked the diva. “Perhaps we could begin by talking to each other,” Dorothy replied. Diva No. 23 seemed to hesitate as she adjusted her tiara. Then, locking arms with Dorothy and Auntie Em, she said, “Let’s go.” They had taken only a few steps, however, when the diva stopped. “Wait a minute,” she said. “I’ve forgotten something.”

Then she turned around and blew out her candle.



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## NOTES

### 1. *Musical Research in Crisis*

1. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, book 20, *Encore (1972–1973), On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 1998), 17. Lacan's statement can serve as a working definition of discourse. Since discourse, however, is one of my primary concerns here, I shall continue to refine its conceptual status throughout the book.

2. Jean-François Lyotard, "Judiciousness in Dispute, or Kant after Marx," in *The Aims of Representation: Subject/Text/History*, ed. Murray Krieger (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 65.

3. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 139.

4. Paul Smith, *Discerning the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 98–99.

5. Peter Jeffery, *Re-Envisioning Past Musical Cultures: Ethnomusicology in the Study of Gregorian Chant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 47.

6. Kay Kaufman Shelemay, "Crossing Boundaries in Music and Musical Scholarship: A Perspective from Ethnomusicology," *Musical Quarterly* 80/1 (spring 1996): 19.

7. John Guillory relates the professionalization of the humanities to the rise of the professional-managerial class on the one hand and the declining value of the cultural capital of the humanities on the other. See his "Literary Critics as Intellectuals: Class Analysis and the Crisis of the Humanities," in *Rethinking Class: Literary Studies and Social Formations*, ed. Wai Chee Dimock and Michael T. Gilmore (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 107–49.

8. This is the case, for example, at the University of Michigan.

9. See Sande Cohen's remarks on "maintenance of the flow of scholarly performance as currency" in *Academia and the Luster of Capital* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 82.

10. For a valuable study of the role of the big Other in education, see Renata Salecl, "Deference to the Great Other: The Discourse of Education," in *Lacanian Theory of Discourse: Subject, Structure, and Society*, ed. Mark Bracher et al. (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 163–75.

11. Throughout this book I will use the term "musicology" to refer to the field of historical musicology. I shall use terms such as "musical research" or "musical scholarship" to designate academic inquiry into music in general.

12. Mark Poster, *The Mode of Information: Poststructuralism and Social Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 15.

13. Jacques Derrida, "To Do Justice to Freud: The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis," *Critical Inquiry* 20/2 (winter 1994): 239.

14. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 108.

15. Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 135.

16. Laclau and Mouffe reject the distinction between discursive and nondiscursive practices. See *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 107.

17. A number of recent collections of essays demonstrate the range of innovation in the field, including the following: *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); *Music and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons*, ed. Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994); *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Gregory E. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); *Music/Ideology: Resisting the Aesthetic*, ed. Adam Krims (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1998); and *Rock Over the Edge: Transformations in Popular Music Culture*, ed. Roger Beebe, Denise Fulbrook, and Ben Saunders (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002). Naturally many other books could be cited.

18. Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 218–19.

19. Eugene Narmour, *The Analysis and Cognition of Basic Melodic Structures: The Implication-Realization Model* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 187–88.

20. Eugene Narmour, "On the Relationship of Analytical Theory to Performance and Interpretation," in *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Leonard B. Meyer*, ed. Eugene Narmour and Ruth A. Solie (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 1988), 336–37.

21. AMS-L electronic discussion group, November 7, 1995. Agawu's essay was published in *Music Theory Online* 2/4 (May 1996).

22. See for example, Pieter C. Van den Toorn, *Music, Politics, and the Academy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

23. Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 214–15.

24. Lawrence Kramer, "Music Criticism and the Postmodern Turn: In Contrary Motion with Gary Tomlinson," *Current Musicology* 53, special issue, *Approaches to the Discipline* (1993): 27, 30. Kramer's piece is a response to Tomlin-

son's "Musical Pasts and Postmodernist Turns: A Response to Lawrence Kramer," in the same issue, pp. 18–24.

25. Gary Tomlinson, "Tomlinson Responds," *Current Musicology* 53 (1993): 36.

26. Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., "Who Hears Here? Black Music, Critical Bias, and the Musicological Skin Trade," *The Musical Quarterly* 85 (Spring 2001): 21.

27. Genesis 11:7, in *Genesis: A New Translation of the Classical Stories*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Harper Collins, 1996).

28. Fredric Jameson argues that the term "postindustrial capitalism" is misleading; he prefers to speak of "multinational capitalism." See his *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 35.

29. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 151, 159.

30. *Ibid.*, 113.

31. Judith A. Peraino, "I Am an Opera: Identifying with Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*," in *En Travesti: Women, Gender, Subversion, Opera*, ed. Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliania Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 128.

32. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 111.

33. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, xxiii–xxiv.

36. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, trans. Don Barry et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 17, 41.

37. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 56.

38. Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

39. Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 69, 83–84.

40. Guido Adler, *Der Stil in der Musik* (Leipzig, 1911).

41. Manfred Bukofzer, *The Place of Musicology in American Institutions of Higher Learning* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 31.

42. Carroll C. Pratt, "Musicology and Related Disciplines," in *Some Aspects of Musicology: Three Essays by Arthur Mendel, Curt Sachs, Carroll C. Pratt* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 55.

43. Joseph Kerman, "A Profile for American Musicology," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 18 (spring 1965): 62–63.

44. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiv.

45. Laclau, introduction to *The Making of Political Identities*, ed. Laclau (London: Verso, 1994), 1.

46. Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 24.

47. *Ibid.*, 126.

48. See, for example, Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

49. Beck, "The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernization," in Beck, Giddens, and Lash, *Reflexive Modernization*, 5–8.

50. *Ibid.*, 8.

51. Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space* (London: Sage, 1994), 122–23.

52. In *Abstracts of Papers Read at the Joint Meetings of the American Musicological Society/Society for Music Theory* (Phoenix, Arizona, October 30–November 2, 1997), 38.
53. Lash, “Reflexivity and its Doubles: Structure, Aesthetics, Community,” in Beck, Giddens, and Lash, *Reflexive Modernization*, 158.
54. *Ibid.*, 136.
55. Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 32.
56. George Orwell, *1984: A Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949; reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 7.
57. Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 15.
58. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 191.
59. *Ibid.*, 190.
60. *Ibid.*, 170–94.
61. *Ibid.*, 202–3.
62. *Ibid.*, 193.
63. William G. Bowen and Neil L. Rudenstine, *In Pursuit of the Ph.D.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). For a perceptive critique of this report, see Peter Brooks, “How Can We Keep on Doing This? Reflections on Graduate Education in the Humanities,” in *The Politics of Research*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan and George E. Levine (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 161–69.
64. Mary Schmelter, “Panopticism and Postmodern Pedagogy,” in *Foucault and the Critique of Institutions*, ed. John Caputo and Mark Yount (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 132.
65. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 57–58.
66. *Ibid.*, 116.
67. *Ibid.*, 68.
68. *Ibid.*, 63.
69. *Ibid.*, 70–71.
70. “Musicology,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), 12: 853.
71. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 147.
72. Paul Smith, *Discerning the Subject*, 118.

## 2. Search for an Antimethod

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 7e.
2. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 41. A number of references to deconstruction have appeared in recent musical scholarship, most often in connection with Derrida’s name, but references to Paul de Man appear as well. These studies include Lawrence Kramer, *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice: 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Kramer, *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002);

Robert Snarrenberg, "The Play of *Différance*: Brahms's Intermezzo Op. 118, No. 2," *In Theory Only* 10 (October 1987): 1–25; Alan Street, "Superior Myths, Dogmatic Allegories: The Resistance to Musical Unity," *Music Analysis* 8 (1989): 77–123; Martin Scherzinger, "The Finale of Mahler's Seventh Symphony: A Deconstructive Reading," *Music Analysis* 14 (1995): 69–88; Rose Rosengard Subotnik, "How Could Chopin's A-Major Prelude Be Deconstructed?" in her *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996): 39–147; Richard Littlefield, "The Silence of the Frames," *Music Theory Online* (<http://societymusictheory.org/mto/index.html>) 2 (1996); Richard Kurth, "Music and Poetry, A Wildness of Doubles: Heine-Nietzsche-Schubert-Derrida," *19th Century Music* 21 (1997): 3–37; Adam Krims, "Disciplining Deconstruction (For Music Analysis)," *19th Century Music* 21 (1998): 297–324; Vera Micznik, "Of Ways of Telling, Intertextuality, and Historical Evidence in Berlioz's *Roméo and Juliette*," *19th Century Music* 24 (Summer 2000): 21–62. Many of these studies are attempts to "apply" deconstruction directly to the analysis of musical compositions; the essays by Street and Krims, however, resist this tendency. For examples of my own engagement with deconstruction, see the following: "Brahms Research and Aesthetic Ideology," *Music Analysis* 12 (1993): 122–31; "Schenker's Organicism Reexamined," *Intégral* 7 (1993): 82–118; Review of *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology*, by Leonard B. Meyer, *JAMS* 64 (1993): 469–75; and Review of *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration*, by Mark Evan Bonds, *Music Theory Spectrum* 16 (Spring 1994): 124–33.

3. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

4. Derrida, *Positions*, 41–42.

5. *Ibid.*, 19.

6. Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study in the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 32–33.

7. John Mowitt, *Text: The Genealogy of an Antidisciplinary Object* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), 40–41.

8. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer, *Criticism and Culture: The Role of Critique in Modern Literary Theory* (Essex, England: Longman, 1991), 6.

9. Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), 35.

10. Rudi Visker, *Michel Foucault: Genealogy as Critique*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1995).

11. Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 1.

12. Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Routledge, 1980), 7.

13. Davis and Schleifer, *Criticism and Culture*, 125.

14. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 120.

15. Joan Wallach Scott, "Experience," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott and Judith Butler (London: Routledge, 1992), 38.

16. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. and revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad Press, 1989).

17. John Brenkman, *Culture and Domination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 38.

18. Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 160.

19. Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel" (1966), and "The Bounded Text" (1966–67) in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Léon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Léon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
20. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).
21. Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention*.
22. Michel Serres with Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 104–6.
23. Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 34.
24. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 108.
25. Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 73–75.
26. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
27. David Herman, *Universal Grammar and Narrative Form* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 190–91.
28. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 181.
29. Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud, *Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzich, afterword by Samuel Weber (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 53.
30. White, "Foucault Decoded: Notes from the Underground," in *Tropics of Discourse*, 230–60.
31. Barbara Johnson, *The Wake of Deconstruction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 48.
32. Stefano Harney and Frederick Moten, "Doing Academic Work," in *Chalk Lines: The Politics of Work in the Managed University*, ed. Randy Martin (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 157.
33. Bakhtin, "From Notes Made in 1970–71," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 136.
34. Barthes, "From Work to Text," 155.
35. Mowitt, *Text*, 41.
36. *Ibid.*, 46.
37. I first came across the term "postdisciplinarity" in Robert Markley, "Complex Dynamics: Literature, Science, and Postdisciplinarity," *Poetics Today* 12 (1991): 337–46. See also the *Stanford Humanities Review* 3 (Fall 1993), special issue, *Music in the Age of Postdisciplinarity*.
38. Dominick LaCapra, "Criticism Today," in *The Aims of Representation: Subject/Text/History*, ed. Murray Krieger (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 236.
39. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 127–28.
40. Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 141.



41. Derrida, *Limited Inc*, trans. Alan Bass, Jeffrey Mehlman, and Samuel Weber (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 141.
42. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 66.
43. Roland Barthes, *S/Z: An Essay*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 10.
44. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 121, 117.
45. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, book 2, *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: Norton, 1991).
46. Theresa Brennan, *History after Lacan* (London: Routledge, 1993); see especially chapter 2, "The Ego's Era," pp. 26–75.
47. Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1990), 253.
48. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 4.
49. *Ibid.*, 169.
50. M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971).
51. Thomas McFarland, *Originality and Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 186, 180.
52. Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 48.
53. Paul de Man, *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism: The Gauss Seminar and Other Papers*, ed. E. S. Burt, Kevin Newmark, and Andrzej Warminski (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 98.
54. Kevin Korsyn, "Beyond Privileged Contexts: Intertextuality, Influence, and Dialogue," in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 55–72.
55. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 21–24.
56. *Ibid.*, 169.
57. Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 27.
58. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 126.
59. Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 92.
60. Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism,'" in *Critical Encounters: Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing*, ed. Cathy Caruth and Deborah Esch (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 219.
61. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, book 12, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981), 276.
62. Mark Bracher, *Lacan, Discourse, and Social Change: A Psychoanalytic Cultural Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 79.
63. LaCapra, "Criticism Today," 245.
64. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 320.
65. Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 50.



66. Friedrich A. Kittler, *Literature, Media, Information Systems*, ed. John Johnston (Amsterdam: Overseas, 1997), 46.
67. Ibid., 139–40.
68. Charles Keil, “Music Mediated and Live in Japan,” in Charles Keil and Steven Feld, *Music Grooves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 247.
69. John Johnston, *Information Multiplicity: American Fiction in the Age of Media Saturation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 215.
70. Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1991), 110.
71. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 36.
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74. Leo Treitler, “The Historiography of Music: Issues of Past and Present,” in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 371, 377.
75. Barbara Claire Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women’s Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 81, 162.
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## 7. Music and Social Antagonisms

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